



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND  
A U S T R A L I A

**The Reforming, Transformative Howard Government?**

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## **Abstract**

Some commentators consider the Howard government saved Australia from the tide of progressive liberalism lead by Paul Keating, some see it as a kind of economic superhero while others portray it as the creator of a Brutopia. What links all of this commentary is an agreement that the Howard government radically transformed Australian politics and the nation. Previous research has not systematically identified how, where and when Howard changed the Australian policy agenda relative to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. This research introduces empirical measurement to the predominately non-quantitative literature in order to identify how and to what extent the Howard government significantly changed Australia's policy agenda.

This research finds that the Howard government cannot be considered a major disruption to Australia's policy agenda. It argues that all governments analysed here: Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard are remarkably similar in their choice of policy issues given priority, and the issues chosen to be excluded from the policy agenda. While statistically significant differences are found between the Howard and the Labor governments, these differences are few. This research suggests that the Howard government is not the turning point in Australian politics that much of the literature claims it to be and that the period is more accurately characterised by policy agenda convergence and continuity.

## **Declaration by author**

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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### **Publications during candidature**

No publications.

### **Publications included in this thesis**

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**Contributions by others to the thesis**

No contributions by others.

**Statement of parts of the thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree**

None.

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Policy agenda, policy punctuation, Policy Agendas Project, Comparative Manifestos Project, ideology, John Howard, Howard government

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## List of Abbreviations

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ANOVA	analysis of variance
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty
APEC	Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation
APRA	Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AWA	Australian Workplace Agreement
CBD	central business district
CMP	Comparative Manifestos Project
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HEEF	Higher Education Endowment Fund
IRA	Irish Republican Army
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAP	Policy Agendas Project
PTA	preferential trade agreements
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Chapter 1 Introduction

John Howard was Australia's second longest serving Prime Minister. He was also one of its most divisive. Some consider Howard as Australia's saviour—the Prime Minister who successfully challenged the permissive liberalism of the (Paul) Keating era. Others view him as having destroyed the post-war Australian settlement: the creator of what Kevin Rudd memorably described as a 'brutopia'.<sup>1</sup> The common thread between these very different views is the belief that, for better or for worse, Australia changed radically under Howard, and that 1996 was a 'critical election': a year zero in Australian politics.<sup>2</sup>

The public seems to believe this view is true because those writing about Howard and the Howard government, whether they are true admirers or ardent haters, so often tell us that it is true. Chroniclers of the Howard years identify the political battles and the policy crusades, and paint a picture of a Prime Minister who was reshaping Australia. This sometimes provides entertaining reading but it also constitutes unsound political science because there is a lack of clear evidence on how, where and when Howard changed the Australian policy agenda relative to his Labor predecessors and successors.

There is a curious dichotomy in the perception of Howard held by many academic writers, who often portray him as a conservative whose government wasted opportunities, while simultaneously describing him as a dangerous and destructive force within Australian society. Much of Howard's legacy is contested in the literature with two competing claims. The first is that Howard changed everything; the second is that he reformed very little. How can both these claims be true? This research is driven by a suspicion that this period was far more complex than much of the literature on the Howard years suggests.

Writers are often happy to declare, rather simplistically, which camp they fall into: one is either a 'Howard hater' or a 'Howard lover'. However, a great deal of work on the Howard era, both the flattering and the critical, contains little empirical evidence and is written from a partisan political perspective. There are many examples of writers who conflate their own ideological and philosophical positions with the Howard legacy. For example, Manne describes the purpose of his book, *The Barren Years*, as recording his 'deepening dismay about the cultural consequences of the Howard government', and that his book is his attempt to explain 'the strange temper that came to dominate Australian politics during the late Howard years—the narrowing of the national vision

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<sup>1</sup> K. Rudd, 'Howard's Brutopia: The Battle of Ideas in Australian Politics', *Monthly*, November 2006, pp. 46–50.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'critical election' is used by G. Evans and P. Norris, *Critical Elections—British Parties and Voters in Long-term Perspective*, London, Sage, 1999.



and the souring of the popular mood'.<sup>3</sup> Manne argues that 'Australia was both a very much wealthier and a very much more unequal, insecure and politically volatile nation than it had been before the era of economic rationalist reform'.<sup>4</sup> This raises a number of questions. What is volatility and how is it to be measured? What evidence is there of changing levels of volatility in Australia over time? There is an important argument for subjecting many of the claims about the Howard years to empirical rigour, as many of these claims appear to be made to support the writer's political and philosophical views.

Despite the pervasiveness of the use of quantitative-data analysis in political science internationally, this approach is not common in Australia. For example, an examination of the *Australian Journal of Political Science* between 2008 and 2012 reveals that of the 167 articles published, only 11 were quantitative, that is less than 7%. This is puzzling given that 'political science draws on a diverse range of research methods including textual analysis, process tracing, historical analysis, discourse analysis, structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, focus groups, participant observation, surveys and opinion polls, statistical analysis and various forms of modelling'.<sup>5</sup> The study of public policy and political science involves complex social, economic, political and global causes and factors, and a range of research methods is required to understand these issues. Debates about appropriate methodologies for studying political science in Australia are often polarised. Those advocating and adopting the use of qualitative methods have often established the legitimacy of these methods by criticising the contribution of quantitative methods, and masking more fundamental differences in epistemology.

This research argues that quantitative methods and studies are an important tool for generating new insights and producing evidence that can be interrogated by others. The argument here is not proposing that Australian political science should be entirely re-oriented toward a quantitative approach. Rather, it follows Carol Johnson's argument that quantitative studies make a necessary contribution to a diverse field of political science research in Australia: 'Institutional research, psephological research, quantitative survey research (including analyses of values), comparative research and a host of other approaches are extremely valuable tools in the armoury which political scientists bring to the study of our fascinating, if somewhat vexed, discipline'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> R. Manne, *The Barren Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture*, Melbourne, Text Publishing Company, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> A. Capling, 'Professing Political Science in Australia: The What, How and Why of a Disciplinary Education', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2010, pp. 475–481.

<sup>6</sup> C. Johnson, 'Austalian Political Science and the Study of Discourse'. Refereed paper presented at the Australasian Political Studies Jubilee Conference. Australian National University, Canberra.

Given the recognition that quantitative research can play a significant role in the discipline,<sup>7</sup> it is surprising that the debates in the literature about the Howard government are bereft of a quantitative approach to research and that attempts to provide thorough analysis are missing in the literature. A direct result of the frequently polemical literature about the Howard era is that many of the claims are not based on data with which others can engage, or interrogate. The distinctive design of this research provides a mechanism to overcome the limitations identified in the literature and seeks to redress the imbalance present in the current approach towards research on the Howard era.

The following central question drives this research. In what ways and to what extent did Howard, and the Coalition government led by him (1996–2007), significantly change the policy agenda in Australian politics relative to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it? In answering this question, this research has five objectives. The first is to provide a review and critique of the existing literature on the Howard era. The second is to demonstrate how Policy Agendas Project (PAP) and Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) coding can be used as a means of contributing to debates about the radicalism of the Howard government. The third is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these methods. The fourth is to develop and apply to the Australian context a range of relevant measures of agenda change. The final objective is to develop additional approaches and measures to provide more detailed accounts of agenda change to supplement aggregate measures derived from the PAP work on the Howard era.

Through its thorough and systematic analysis this research makes an important contribution to the body of work concerned with the Howard government. It creates a new lens through which to view the Howard era, enriching our understanding and shedding new light on the disruptions and continuities of Australia's policy agenda. In doing these things, and in examining so many documents, it creates a valuable resource for scholars of public policy and modern Australian politics. To my knowledge no other study in Australian political science has adopted this methodological treatment to substantiate claims of political commentators on the Howard era.

While this research uses data to answer the research question, the data are not purely quantitative, rather they present qualitatively coded information in a quantitative fashion. The first of the coding methods used in this research is PAP, which is a method of coding that enables mapping of the contents of policy agenda across 19 major policy categories and over 200 minor policy categories. PAP has been used to analyse agenda change in more than 14 countries<sup>8</sup> and has generated a sizeable amount of literature on the dynamics of agenda change, the causal mechanisms

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of this argument can be seen in the work of Porta and Keating 2008; Steinmo 2008; Pierson and Skocpol 2006; Franklin 2008; Mahoney and Goertz 2006.

<sup>8</sup> A complete list of these countries can be found at [www.comparativeagendas.org](http://www.comparativeagendas.org).

of agenda setting and the secular evolution of post-war liberal democracies.<sup>9</sup> Baumgartner and Jones created a tool, PAP, for the primary function of collecting and analysing data to map changes in the United States' national governmental policy agenda. As part of PAP, more than 100,000 United States government documents, dating back to 1945, have now been coded to enable examination of policy change over time. This work has had a great deal of influence on the study of public policy worldwide.<sup>10</sup>

The data have been used in a variety of studies to describe issues such as the effect of new governments on policy agenda and the degree to which the policy agenda in different countries changes in a similar manner at the same time. It is also used to track specific policy issues across eras and across different countries. This system of categorisation for public policy has produced a body of academic work that demonstrates the pattern of policy change across a range of political institutions, systems and environments.<sup>11</sup>

The key to understanding PAP is the large-scale datasets it has produced. The central element in this coding exercise is a topic code, which defines the specific topic that is addressed in a document or statement. The use of a standardised codebook allows PAP to conduct historical and comparative research. Baumgartner and Jones' original coding scheme consists of 225 sub-topics that are grouped into the 19 major topics presented in Table 1.1 (the sub-topic codes are presented in Appendix 1).

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<sup>9</sup> P. John, 'The Policy Agendas Project: A Review', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 13, 2006, pp. 975–986.

<sup>10</sup> An overview of many of the studies that use this method can be found at <http://www.comparativeagendas.org>.

<sup>11</sup> Examples of the work can be seen in: Baumgartner, Foucault, and Francois 2006; Baumgartner, Breunig, Green-Pedersen, Jones, Mortensen, Nuytemans, and Walgrave; Breunig 2006; Breunig and Koski 2006; Jennings and John 2009, 2010; John and Jennings 2010; John and Margetts 2003; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a, 2005b; Jones, Baumgartner, and True 1998; True, Jones, and Baumgartner 1999; Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009; Adler and Wilkerson 2008; Albaek, Green-Pedersen, and Nielsen 2007; Baumgartner 2006; Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2008; Breeman 2006; Breeman, Lowery, Poppleaars, Resodihardjo, Timmermans, and de Vries 2009; Chaques, Palau, Munoz, and Wilkerson 2008; Chaques and Palau 2009; Daviter 2009; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008; Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson 2006; Green-Pedersen 2006, 2007; Hillard, Purpura, and Wilkerson 2008; Jones and Breunig 2007; Mortensen 2005, 2006, 2007; Princen 2007, 2009, 2010; Princen and Rhinard 2006; Ramjoue and Kloti 2003; Walgrave, Soroka, and Nuytemans 2008; Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009; Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006; Walgrave Dumont, and Varone 2006; Adler and Wilkerson 2012; Albæk, Green-Pedersen, and Nielsen 2007; Bevan, John, and Jennings 2011; Binderkrantz and Green-Pedersen 2009; Jennings, Bevan, and John 2011; John and Margetts 2003; John, Bevan, and Jennings 2011; John and Bevan 2012; McLaughlin, Wolfgang, Leckrone, Gollob, Bossie, Jennings, and Atherton 2010; Schiffino and Varone 2003; Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2008.

**Table 1.1: The 19 Major Policy Codes**

	Major Policy Code
1	Macroeconomics
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties
3	Health
4	Agriculture
5	Labour, Employment and Immigration
6	Education and Culture
7	Environment
8	Energy
9	Transportation
10	Law, Crime and Family Issues
11	Social Welfare
12	Community Development, Planning and Housing Issues
13	Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce
14	Defence
15	Space, Science, Technology and Communication
16	Foreign Trade
17	International Affairs and Foreign Aid
18	Government Operations
19	Public Lands, Water Management, Colonial and Territorial Issues

A wide range of documents has been used to conduct this type of research, including parliamentary questions, speeches by government officials, budget speeches, and parliamentary hearings.<sup>12</sup> In a particular speech or document to be analysed, PAP allocates one of the above major policy codes and one minor policy code to each sentence in a document. To enable comparison, these policy codes are converted into proportions, for example, the proportion of the document that deals with defence, or social welfare or health.

This coding then produces sets of data that can be analysed individually or measured for evidence of punctuations. It is important to stress that PAP measures proportionate not absolute attention, and that policy punctuations do not indicate increases or decreases in the absolute amount of attention devoted to an issue. However, these measurements reveal that policy agenda tends to change in a particular manner, not incrementally, but characterised by long periods of constancy followed by dramatic punctuations, with issues that were at one time marginal suddenly consuming a great amount of attention. These policy punctuations measure increases in the rate of change of the attention paid to an issue within a given period.

Critical to PAP is the claim that all governments are faced with demands to address issues across the full spectrum of policy areas, and that governments select which of these issues to

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<sup>12</sup> See John 2006, p. 980 for an overview of the various types of documents to which the coding scheme has been applied.

prioritise. Governments tend to pay most attention to issue areas that are a priority to them. As such, by coding government documents such as budget speeches, it is possible to identify the relative importance a government places on a particular policy topic.

It is important to be clear that PAP does not describe the nature of policy initiatives nor does it measure the significance of policy interventions. PAP does not make any assessment about the effectiveness of policy so while an issue may receive a high proportion of a government's attention it does not necessarily follow that there is a positive impact of this attention. PAP focuses on a specific dimension of policy-making, the policy topics defined by the PAP codebook, which is a government's choice to be interested in macroeconomics, or agriculture or international affairs as distinct features of activity. It is concerned with measuring the extent to which the effort of government is focused on particular kinds of public issues.

The data set used in this research is a product of my coding work, as well as that of the Australian PAP and the PAP in the United Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> The Australian Policy Agendas Project provided this project with coded Governor General speeches. A list of all of the Acts of Parliament passed from 1983 to 2010 were also obtained from the Australian PAP but were recoded for this project. It is important to make clear that I am not part of, nor employed by, the Australian PAP. The documents that have been coded include the following:

- budget speeches delivered by the Federal Treasurer from 1983–2011 (involving coding 6,255 individual sentences)
- Acts of Parliament from 1983–2011 (involving coding 4,890 Acts)
- Governor General speeches from 1983–2008 (obtained from Australian PAP)
- budget speeches delivered by the Federal Treasurer from 1966–1978 (involving coding 5,542 individual sentences)
- speeches from the Throne 1979–2008 (obtained from United Kingdom PAP)
- Acts of the United Kingdom Parliament 1979–2008 (obtained from United Kingdom PAP)

This data serves as the population from which policy punctuations and policy shifts will be identified. In analysing these data, three tests for difference are conducted: Kolmogorov–Smirnov test,<sup>14</sup> Kruskal–Wallis test,<sup>15</sup> Mann–Whitney test and Bonferroni correction.<sup>16</sup> Siegelman and

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<sup>13</sup> The United Kingdom PAP can be found at [www.policyagendasuk.wordpress.com](http://www.policyagendasuk.wordpress.com).

<sup>14</sup> The Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K-S) test tests for the equality of continuous, one-dimensional probability distributions that can be used to compare a sample with a reference probability distribution or to compare two samples.

<sup>15</sup> The Kruskal–Wallis test is a method used for comparing more than two samples that are independent.

<sup>16</sup> The Mann–Whitney test is used to follow up any significant findings with a Bonferroni correction applied to test all effects to counteract the problem of multiple comparisons, and it controls the probability of false positives.

Buell's<sup>17</sup> measure of agenda stability is then applied to demonstrate the degree to which a political speech diverges from the equivalent political speech in the previous year. Chapters 3 and 5 present the detail of these tests.

To consider policy punctuations and policy shifts, this research adopts a similar method to that used by Jennings and John in their work on large changes in the agenda of governments in the United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup> One of the first tasks is to extract the key policy changes from the data series. This can be achieved by two methods. The first method takes the proportional percentage change, which is  $Y = [(X_t/Z_t) - (X_{t-1}/Z_{t-1})] / (X_t/Z_t)$ . This is equal to the proportional change in the percentage of policy units (e.g. budget-speech mentions, Acts of Parliament) within the total agenda space (Z). For example, when the overall agenda space remains stable at 20 sentences within a speech, an increase from one (5%) to four (20%) sentences is equal to a proportional percentage increase of 300%. The second method is the proportional count change, which is the proportional change in the number of policy units (e.g. budget-speech mentions, Acts of Parliament) in a given year (t) relative to the number in the previous year (t-1). For example, an increase from one to four Acts of Parliament is equal to a proportional increase of 300%:  $Y = (X_t - X_{t-1}) / X_{t-1} \times 100$ .

The argument that emerges here is that all the governments considered from 1983 to 2011, have chosen to prioritise the same policy areas and have also chosen to give minimal levels of attention to the same group of policy issues, creating a stable policy agenda. This thesis argues the following points: (1) all Australian governments during this period prioritised the same policy areas; (2) these governments devoted the least amount of their agenda to the same policy issues; (3) these governments afford similar proportions of their attention to similar issues; and (4) that where differences do occur in policy focus between these governments, they are small. The analysis of the data supports the claim that the election of the Howard government did not result in a major disruption to the policy agenda in Australian politics.

These findings raise two questions. The first is whether the reason the findings do not support the literature's claims about the Howard era having changed the Australian political landscape is because PAP is flawed in its capacity to map agenda change. The second question is how best to understand many of the claims in the literature about the Howard government. To address the first question's doubts about the accuracy of PAP, two tests are conducted in Chapter 7. As the (Gough) Whitlam era is a period of Australian politics acknowledged as one of significant

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<sup>17</sup> To show how far a speech converges from the speech in the previous year, see L. Siegelman and E. Buell, 'Avoidance or Engagement? Issue Convergence in US Presidential Campaigns, 1960–2000', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2004, pp. 650–651.

<sup>18</sup> W. Jennings and P. John, 'Punctuations and Turning Points in British Politics? The Policy Agenda of the Queen's Speech in the United Kingdom 1940–2005', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2010, pp. 561–586.

policy-agenda change, this era is analysed to determine whether PAP is able to map change that occurred in the Whitlam government. The second test examines whether PAP detects changes in the policy agenda of the (Tony) Blair government in the United Kingdom. If significant evidence of agenda change is found in these two cases then there can be greater levels of confidence in the methodology that serves as the basis of the finding that the content of the agenda changed little under the Howard government.

The second question to arise as a result of the findings of the data analysis in Chapter 5 is addressed by analysing whether it is more accurate to characterise the Howard era as an ideological punctuation rather than a major policy punctuation. To perform this analysis, this research employs a second classification scheme, CMP. The aim of subjecting budget speeches and Governor General speeches to quantitative content analysis is to measure governments' policy-position preferences using a common framework. This system was developed to code all the content of election programmes for the period post – World War II in a variety of countries.<sup>19</sup> The first version of the classification scheme was developed by Robertson<sup>20</sup> and has gained a 'near monopoly status in the field'.<sup>21</sup> It has been used to code more than 3,000 election manifestos issued by more than 650 parties in more than 50 countries.<sup>22</sup> The scheme uses 56 standard categories to measure policy preferences.<sup>23</sup> Each of the 56 categories captures policy issues in a manner that changes over time, and can be measured across parties and governments, providing both quantification (i.e. how many statements parties or governments make) and classification (i.e. what kind of statements parties or governments make).

As with PAP, the coding unit of CMP is the 'quasi-sentence', which is the expression of a political idea or issue. Long sentences can be broken into quasi-sentences if the argument changes within the sentence. If different issues are treated in the same sentence, they constitute different

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<sup>19</sup> See the Manifesto Project Database at <http://manifestoproject.wzb.eu>.

<sup>20</sup> D. Robertson, *A Theory of Party of Competition*, London, John Wiley & Sons, 1976, pp. 73–75.

<sup>21</sup> M. Laver and J. Garry, 'Estimating Policy Positions from Political Texts', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2000, pp. 619–634.

<sup>22</sup> A sample of the literature on the Comparative Manifestos Project and its classification scheme can be found in I. Budge, D. Robertson, and D. Hearl (eds.), *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analysis of Post-War Election Programs in 19 Democracies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; I. Budge, H. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara, E. Tanenbaum with R.C. Fording, D.J. Hearl, H.M Kim, M.D. McDonald, and S. Mendes, *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors and Governments, 1945–1998*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001; H. Klingemann, R.I. Hofferbert, and I. Budge, *Parties, Policies, and Democracy*, Oxford, Westford Press, 1994; M. Laver and I. Budge (eds.), *Party Policy and Coalition Government*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1992; G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976; R. Thomson, 'The Programme to Policy Linkage: The Fulfilment of Election Pledges on Socio-economic Policy in the Netherlands, 1986–1998', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2001, pp. 171–197.

<sup>23</sup> A detailed overview of the CMP can be found in I. Budge, H.D. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara, and E. Tanenbaum (eds.), *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors and Governments 1945–1988*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

quasi-sentences, even if they apply to the same policy field. The goal of applying quasi-sentences to the classification is to identify the overall argument in a sentence.

The data seeks to enable these comparisons by expressing the shares of speeches devoted to each category in a set of standardised issue areas. The data set used in this research is the result of coding the following documents:

- budget speeches from 1983 to 2011 (involving coding 6,255 sentences)
- Governor General speeches from 1983 to 2011 (coding accessed through the work of Dowding, Hindmoor, Iles and John)<sup>24</sup>
- United Kingdom speeches from the Throne from 1979 to 2008 (coding 2,376 sentences)

The results of this coding, detailed in Chapter 6, are presented in their percentage frequencies measuring ‘relative emphasis’ on each of the 56 topic codes. The frequency data are then scaled to place a government’s position on the ‘left–right’ dimension by calculating the sum of the emphasis on a fixed set of ‘right’ issues subtracted from another fixed set of ‘left’ issues to produce a Rile Score. This coding method offers this research a definitive, consistent and transparent approach to what constitutes left and right, and as such, facilitates meaningful comparison between the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. CMP has proven to be superior to other coding methods in its capacity to deal with judgements about what constitutes left and right in the political arena over time. Therefore, it enables this research to test the degree to which the Howard government differed ideologically from the Labor governments that preceded and followed it.

The CMP analysis produced mixed results. When using the mean of the Governor General speeches and the budget speeches, the Howard government was positioned further to the right than the (Bob) Hawke, Keating, Rudd or (Julia) Gillard governments. The Howard government was also positioned furthest to the right when using data from the Governor General speeches alone. However, the budget-speech analysis demonstrated a different result, with the Howard government positioned to the left of both the Keating and Gillard governments. Some of the results were expected but some results were less expected. For example, it was surprising that the Rudd government was found to be the most left of the group. It was not anticipated that both the Keating and Gillard governments were positioned to the right of the Hawke government. Another unexpected finding from the budget-speech analysis was that the Howard government was positioned to the left of both the Keating and Gillard governments. It is reasonable to expect that the

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<sup>24</sup> Accessed through the work done by K. Dowding, A. Hindmoor, R. Iles, and P. John, ‘Policy Agendas in Australian Politics: The Governor-General’s Speeches, 1945–2000’, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2010, pp. 533–557.



Howard government would be positioned furthest to the right in the budget-speech analysis but it was unexpected that the Howard government's 2004 budget speech was positioned furthest to the left of all the budget speeches from all the governments analysed.

Howard's reputation for having little interest in political philosophy is supported by the evidence from the analysis of ideological positions varying over time. Errington and van Onselen describe Howard as someone who 'promoted himself as an ordinary bloke, with his values emanating from the suburbs of Sydney rather than abstract ideas'.<sup>25</sup> For many critics of Howard, he is described as a very conservative Prime Minister. Howard described himself as a conservative leader, stating that we 'are a party both of courageous reform when that reform is needed, and also a party that defends and preserves the traditions of Australia that we all cherish'.<sup>26</sup> Manne claims that Howard was 'not only a conservative prime minister ... He was also an unusually ideologically driven one'.<sup>27</sup> This kind of claim is not supported by the analysis of this research.

Manne argues that Howard changed the country to an extent that was previously 'inconceivable'.<sup>28</sup> Errington and van Onselen's claim that Howard's approach was often contradictory and could be at various times, liberal, conservative or radical<sup>29</sup> is supported by the analysis of this research. Grattan describes Howard as being 'committed to the ideology of economic reform, spliced with pragmatism' and as a 'conviction politician'.<sup>30</sup> Others less kindly describe Howard as a political opportunist.<sup>31</sup> What is striking in the literature is that while similar claims of political opportunism are levelled at both Howard and Hawke, Howard receives a level of vitriol about this that Hawke does not. Kelly, prior to Howard coming to the Prime Ministership, described his approach as a 'mixture of radicalism or orthodoxy, depending upon the issue'.<sup>32</sup>

The claim that Australian political parties are not very ideological seems to be supported by this research through the similarity that is found between the two major political parties. While many portray Howard as a very conservative Prime Minister, an analysis of the CMP data demonstrates that his government was remarkably similar to those led by Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard. While he is to the right of these Prime Ministers, the difference is relatively minor.

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<sup>25</sup> W. Errington and P. van Onselen, *John Winston Howard: The Definitive Biography*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2007, p. 216.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>27</sup> R. Manne, 'Introduction', in R. Manne (ed.), *The Howard Years*, Melbourne, Black Inc. Agenda, 2004, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> R. Manne, 'The Insider', *The Monthly*, October 2009, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup> Errington and van Onselen, p. 217.

<sup>30</sup> M. Grattan, 'John Winston Howard', in M. Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, Frenchs Forest, New Holland, 2000, p. 438.

<sup>31</sup> G. Rundle, 'The Opportunist John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction', *Quarterly Essay*, no. 3, October 2001.

<sup>32</sup> P. Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1990s*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1992, p. 229.

Such analysis certainly does not support the claim that Howard was a ‘very conservative’ Prime Minister.

By applying PAP and CMP to analyse agenda changes, this research provides empirical evidence on four areas of the Howard era. The first is the identification of policy priorities of the government, the areas that consumed most of the Howard government’s attention and those that received minimal attention. The second is that the analysis of PAP and CMP data provides a platform for comparison of the Howard government agenda with governments that existed before and after it. Third, the identification of agenda changes, when they occurred and the nature and longevity of the changes, thereby revealing whether change was sustained over the duration of the Howard era or whether there was a sudden policy punctuation when the Howard government was elected. Finally, CMP analysis allows this research to offer an alternative characterisation of the Howard government by analysing the Howard government through its ideological spatial positioning when compared to the governments of Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard.

Overall, these data allow for the emergence of an empirically informed answer to the central question of this research: in what ways and to what extent did Howard, and the Coalition government led by him (1996–2007), significantly change the policy agenda in Australian politics relative to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it? The adoption of the PAP and CMP classification systems in this research allows the gaps in the literature about the Howard era to be filled in two critical ways. First, such analysis provides a consistent methodology on which to make comparisons. This means that when policy changes occur in the prioritisation of issues or problems, it will be observable in the data. Such shifts are seen through the systematic quantitative measurement of variables such as Acts of Parliament, budget speeches and Governor General speeches. Second, providing empirical data allows for engagement and argument in the accompanying analysis, thereby removing the circular nature that characterises much of the arguments in the literature on the Howard legacy.

This research is comprised of eight chapters and is presented as follows. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on the Howard era, expressing a range of views. A great deal of the literature, both the flattering and the critical adopts a polemic and partisan perspective, providing scope for the application of a more rigorous methodology. Much of Howard’s legacy is contested but the literature review reveals two competing claims that characterise the literature: the first is that Howard changed everything, and the second is that he reformed very little. Chapter 3 focuses on the claim for quantifying and measuring and the manner in which this can be achieved through the adoption of the PAP and CMP coding schemes. This chapter details some of the theoretical components underpinning both the PAP and the CMP methods and proceeds to identify some of the key strengths and limitations of the approaches, highlighting how the PAP and CMP allow this

research to ameliorate some of the failings of the existing literature on the Howard era. Chapter 4 is a descriptive chapter that provides a systematic overview of the policy agenda pursued by the Howard government across each of the PAP major policy codes to provide an understanding of Howard's achievements and the policy agenda pursued by his government. Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of the PAP data, the documents chosen for coding, why they were chosen and what the results demonstrate. This chapter argues that the Howard government is remarkably similar to those of the Labor governments that preceded and followed it.

As Chapter 5 demonstrates that the Howard era was not a major policy punctuation as much of the literature argues it is, Chapter 6 applies the CMP coding system to determine whether the Howard government can be characterised more correctly as an ideological punctuation. This chapter also provides an analysis of the CMP classification scheme data in detail for the Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments and their ideological spatial positioning. Analysis of this data enables this research to be clear about the ideological evolution of the policy agenda under Howard and whether he shifted his party to the right or to the left in specific policy areas.

As the evidence from the PAP analysis in Chapter 5 contradicts the dominant themes in the literature, it may be considered that this is due to the inability of PAP to measure change in policy agenda. To counter such doubts, Chapter 7 tests PAP by two means. The first is by comparing the level of agenda change seen during the Howard government with the Whitlam government, which is commonly acknowledged as having produced the greatest reforms and change in Australian politics. To enable this comparison, the content of budget speeches from 1966 to 1978 were coded. Two kinds of comparison are then made. The first is between the content of the policy agenda under the governments led by John Gorton (1968–1971), William McMahon (1971–1972) and Whitlam (1972–1975) to verify whether Labor's election in 1972 constituted a punctuation or turning point in policy agenda. The second test of the PAP method supplements the macro-level analysis in Chapter 5 with a comparative case study to determine whether attention levels and policy priorities in Britain are detectable under the Blair government. This allows the verification of whether PAP is able to detect change in a period acknowledged as time in which significant change was occurring, prevailing trends in attention to particular policy areas and assists in assessing whether some of these trends are unique to the Howard era or whether they are also present in another Westminster system during the same period.

The objective of Chapters 6 and 7 is to add to the data analysed in Chapter 5 in order to answer the question driving this research, which is whether the Howard government significantly changed the policy agenda in Australia relative to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. This approach produces a mechanism for a meaningful and systematic comparative analysis.



## Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter examines the literature concerned with the Howard government and its legacy. There are three principal observations about the literature on the Howard government. The first is that it is dualistic, polarising and, at times, vitriolic. The second is that a great deal of the analysis is limited to one of three discrete categories: the ideology and politics of Howard and his government; the Howard government's economic policy; and the social/cultural dimension of the Howard-government era. Some of this literature lacks sound methodology and evidence to support its claims. The final section of this chapter focuses on a strand of the literature that adopts a more nuanced and holistic approach to examining the Howard government, arguing that there are more similarities than differences between the Howard government and its Labor predecessors (the Hawke and Keating governments) and successors (the Rudd/Gillard governments).

The literature considered here includes autobiographies of Howard and Peter Costello (Treasurer in the Howard government), accounts written by political journalists such as Kelly and Megologenis, as well as the work of biographers with academic backgrounds such as van Onselen and Errington. As expected, the literature encompasses analysis from all sections of the political community. Some work demonstrates quite open disapproval of the Howard government (e.g. academic writer Manne's *The Howard Years*); some work is by conservatively inclined writers such as Windschuttle, Jones and Evans who edited *The Howard Era*; and some work demonstrates unequivocal adoration (populated predominately by the conservative press).

Work ranges from authors who praise the Howard era to those who are ashamed of it. Often, both the flattering and the critical accounts contain little empirical evidence and are written from a biased political perspective. Much of the Howard government's legacy is contested throughout the literature. Only three claims can be identified that may achieve universal acceptance. The first is that Howard, and the government he led, polarised the Australian populace. The second is that the Howard government met with a great deal of electoral success. The third is that Howard is 'profoundly uncool'.<sup>33</sup> The Howard era is particularly unfashionable in academic circles, demonstrating a 'regrettable chasm that exists between academic and popular analysis, and the imbalance between the single biography of Howard and the multiple biographies of Latham'.<sup>34</sup> Howard's biographers explain the academic attitude towards the Howard era as follows:

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<sup>33</sup> K. Huyn, 'John Howard's Decade of Uncool', *On Line Opinion*, 2012, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=4207>, (accessed 2 February 2012).

<sup>34</sup> J. Warhurst, 'The Howard Decade in Australian Government and Politics', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2007, p. 191.

Humanities academics, the arts community, public broadcasters and the Fairfax broadsheets could hardly have shared a world view more different from that of John Howard. This group tolerated Keating because he supplemented the economic liberalism they hated with attention and funding for their various obsessions. Howard, in studied contrast, rejected the triumvirate of reconciliation, multiculturalism and republicanism. It turned out to be very convenient for Australia's intellectuals to have the sum of all their fears bound up in one political leader.<sup>35</sup>

There is a curious dichotomy in the perception of Howard presented by many academic writers: he is at once portrayed as conservative, evidenced in claims that his government wasted opportunities, and depicted as a dangerous and destructive force within Australian society.

Some consider Howard one of Australia's most successful Prime Ministers, as evidenced in the following quotation:<sup>36</sup>

John Howard has been the finest prime minister Australia has had ... He rebuilt a political philosophy of individual responsibility for a new generation. His legacy is profound. From workplace reform to welfare to indigenous politics, to our sense of national identity, Howard has changed the nation in a way very few leaders ever do.<sup>37</sup>

For others, the Howard era 'increasingly shines out as a beacon of pragmatic achievement, modes and piecemeal development not influenced by political shibboleth or progressive ideology'.<sup>38</sup> For many writers, Howard is seen as unimaginative, suburban, and as clinging to outmoded traditions and ideas:

Howard was mired in the 1950s, a man who came over all misty eyed when recalling those glory days when Australia was still hanging on firmly to Mother England's apron strings, nice people lived in suburban houses on a quarter acre, a wild night was when someone broke free from singing songs around the piano and danced the hokey-pokey, and modern art was a foreign pestilence successfully quarantined from our shores.<sup>39</sup>

Many writers on Howard openly declare how they feel about him, and often, one is either a 'Howard hater' or a 'Howard lover'. Although Adams argues that hatred is not a particularly accurate 'emotional description', stating that there seemed to be 'more disdain, indignation, anger, distaste and contempt than hatred'.<sup>40</sup> Carlyon describes the perceptions of Howard and Keating by

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<sup>35</sup> Errington and van Onselen, p. 259.

<sup>36</sup> J. Stone, 'Our Greatest Prime Minister?', in K. Windschuttle, D.M. Jones, and R. Evans (eds.), *The Howard Era*, Sydney, Quadrant Books, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> J. Albrechtsen, 'Pass Baton to Costello', *Janet Albrechtsen's blog* [web blog], 6 September 2007, <http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/janetalbrechtsen/index.php>, (accessed 19 January 2012).

<sup>38</sup> D.M. Jones, 'Introduction', in K. Windschuttle, D.M. Jones, and R. Evans (eds.), *The Howard Era*, Sydney, Quadrant Books, 2009, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> B. Leak, 'Read My Lips', in N. Cater (ed.), *The Howard Factor: A Decade that Changed the Nation*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2006, p. 194.

<sup>40</sup> D. Adams, 'Staying On', in C. Aulich and R. Wettenhall (eds.), *Howard's Fourth Government*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2008, p. 277.

the 'intellectual class': Howard was 'an interloper and Keating had greatness in him. Howard sees postcards and Keating painted great frescoes in our minds. Howard is mean-spirited and Keating was all about kindness and goodness. Howard is suburban and Keating had a large mind'.<sup>41</sup> Jones argues that 'there is a pressing need for commentators of a realist or conservative disposition to define the enduring legacy of the Howard era ... before the period is explained away, by the self-appointed academic guardians of Australia's progressive future, and reduced to some temporary and inconvenient aberration on the road to a post-Western, multicultural utopia'.<sup>42</sup> It is necessary to have more balanced and precise attention paid to this era. However, is it necessary that it be done by 'analysts of a conservative disposition'? This would perpetuate the notion that to write about the Howard government, one must be a conservative, which would lead to doubts about the expectation for empiricism, measurement and objectivity in analysis.

Given that Howard was Australia's second longest serving Prime Minister, this era of government requires more precise analysis and careful attention. However, the vitriolic and highly charged nature of some of the commentary becomes apparent very quickly. This period of government in Australia was far more complex than much of the writing suggests. Shanahan argues that Howard 'has had more vitriol directed towards him than any prime minister since Billy Hughes'.<sup>43</sup> Keating has described Howard as 'a dead carcass swinging in the breeze', 'brain-dead' and 'like a lizard on a rock—alive but looking dead'. Mark Latham insulted him as an 'arselicker', leading a 'congaline of suckholes on the conservative side of Australian politics'.<sup>44</sup> Howard's election victory in 2004 prompted the following bitter outburst from Ramsey in *The Sydney Morning Herald*: 'I thought we had more brains, more self-respect. I was wrong in thinking enough voters "just might" see through the confidence trickery of John Howard, master illusionist and toad of a human being'.<sup>45</sup> In his book *Goodbye Jerusalem*, Ellis describes Howard as a 'wittering, devious goose' and comments that his performance in a television programme was 'meek and piss-weak and sort of commonsensical but very narrow, a Barry Humphries collation not far from Sandy Stone'.<sup>46</sup> Ellis also states that Howard 'was so much littler, so much less impressive, than the haughty eminences of yore'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> L. Carlyon, *Bulletin*, 2001, p. 28.

<sup>42</sup> Jones, 'Introduction', p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> D. Shanahan, 'Two Howards', in N. Cater (ed.), *The Howard Factor*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2006, p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in P. Hartcher, *To the Bitter End: The Dramatic Story of the Fall of John Howard and the Rise of Kevin Rudd*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2009, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> A. Ramsay, 'The Other Election Losers', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 October 2004.

<sup>46</sup> B. Ellis, *Goodbye Jerusalem: Night Thoughts of a Labor Outsider*, Milsons Point, Vintage, 1997.

<sup>47</sup> D. Adams, 'John Howard: Never Great, Always Adequate', in G. Singleton (ed.), *The Howard Government*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2000, p. 14.

While it is expected that there would be heated and personal attacks from his political rivals, and even some media analysts, it is surprising that a more nuanced debate is absent in much of the academic literature. While it is appropriate that there be strong criticism of policy positions and analysis, often the critiques are both personality based and fierce. For example, the following quotation is from one of Australia's most eminent academics, and one of the Howard government's most ardent critics:

Howard has the breadth of vision of a blindworm and the imagination of a damp lettuce. The man knows nothing but politics. Beyond a Ginger-Meggs devotion to sport and its (politically useful) stars he has no known outside interests. Intellectual pursuits are a waste of time—indeed, faintly suspect, as his attacks on the elites and the intelligentsia make clear. One suspects that the last non-political book he read was the *Boy Scout's Guide to Knots* and the last time he was in a theatre was to have his tonsils out.<sup>48</sup>

A survey of the literature about the Howard era leads to some fundamental questions about the nature of political science in Australia, and the manner in which the debates are conducted. Much of the debate in the literature is profoundly non-academic, with authors continuing to broadcast their priors without considering new evidence or other views. The prevailing view in the methodology in political science is that scholars should put aside moral judgements and political values in favour of detached enquiry. Clearly, each scholar's approach to their subject is determined by their ontological and epistemological position<sup>49</sup> and the notion that the study of political science should be apolitical and value neutral is a contested and long-running debate. Any attempts to classify epistemological positions are contested, and such classification is not the focus of this research; however, a suspicion arises about the intellectual rigour of the commentary when scholarship becomes polemical and devoid of sound methodology. The point here is not whether a positivist, interpretivist or realist approach should be taken, but rather that whichever approach is adopted, scholarly standards of evidence should be apparent.<sup>50</sup>

The suggestion here is not that every view is entirely subjective in the literature on the Howard era; however, it is clear that not every opinion is of equal value. There are many examples in this body of work that is polemical and partisan and does not appear to rest upon the articulation

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<sup>48</sup> R. Manne (ed.), *The Howard Years*, Melbourne, Black Inc. Agenda, 2004, pp. 60–61.

<sup>49</sup> D. Marsh and P. Furlong, 'A Skin, Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science', in D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science* 2nd edn., 2002, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> For an overview of ontology and epistemology, see C. Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002. For an overview on the positivist approach, see T. Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970; C. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science*, New York, The Free Press, 1965. For a discussion on the interpretive approach, see M. Bevir and R.A.W. Rhodes, 'Interpretive Theory', in D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds.), *Theories and Methods in Political Science*, 2nd edn., London, Macmillan, 2000, pp. 131–152; and on realism, see A. Sayer, *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach*, London, Hutchinson, 1984.



and pursuit of a clear method or the systemic collection of evidence following protocols which others could replicate. It is important to differentiate between rational analysis and work that proceeds from an ideological and political framework. Many of the arguments, while emotive and well written, are not tested and produce no evidence for their claims. Partial and multiple causes are a reality, as is complexity, and while this may not sit easily with spectacular claims or partisan debate, it is important to present a disciplined argument. For example, it is difficult to see where Australia's social fabric 'has been shredded' or how Howard 'undermined Australian democracy'<sup>51</sup> in a country with relatively minimal racial tensions, and with one of the largest immigrant intakes since the end of the World War II. The shredding of the social fabric is not apparent, nor is the crumbling of democracy in Australia. It is important that 'these views need to be matched by more sober analysis of modern political party realities and processes'.<sup>52</sup> The literature on the Howard era contains minimal references to political theory, with little attention paid to governance structures in analysis. Uhr characterises some of the literature as 'superficial and weak' when it allows polarised perspectives in political commentary to be so disconnected from political theory and evidence-based analysis.<sup>53</sup>

Excusing research that adheres to prevailing academic wisdom about the Howard era from the task of accounting for its political values does little to legitimise the work, and cannot be considered a productive way to proceed with research on this topic. It is vital that there be a willingness to critique contributions to the debate about the Howard era to contribute to wider political discourse. Methodology (i.e. the manner in which political scientists and academics justify their claims) is imperative to intellectual activity. Much of the work about Howard is lacking in this. Many of the claims and arguments about the Howard-led government must be supported with empirical evidence to legitimise their claims to allow testing of, engagement with, and debate on these claims

The second factor that is striking about the literature on the Howard era is that there are very few holistic pieces of work on this era to examine the legacy in its entirety, with writers preferring to limit their critique or analysis to one of three discrete topics: ideology, economics or social/cultural issues. While acknowledging that examining each of these areas in depth is important, clearly a government constitutes more than just one of these components. It is important for all governments to get the policy mix 'right', and this element requires more attention in the

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<sup>51</sup> R. Wear, 'Permanent Populism: The Howard Government 1996–2007', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2008, p. 617.

<sup>52</sup> S. Prasser, 'Review of Norman Abjorensen, John Howard and the Conservative Tradition', *On Line Opinion*, 2010, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=11451>, (accessed 2 February 2012).

<sup>53</sup> J. Uhr in C. Aulich and R. Wettenthal (eds.), *Howard's Fourth Government: Australian Commonwealth Administrations, 2004–2007*, Sydney, University of New South Wales, 2008, p. 72.

literature. Each of these three topics will now be discussed, beginning with the ideology and politics of Howard and the Howard government.

Much of the literature centres on the ideological underpinnings of the government led by Howard, as well as Howard's personal beliefs and drivers. While the consideration of the political and ideological position of Howard and his government is a worthwhile pursuit in itself, the literature remains contested. Much of the debate centres on whether Howard is a conservative, and if so what kind of conservative. It asks whether his ideology was a mix of conservatism and liberalism, neo-liberalism or whether he can be more correctly understood as a postmodernist, a populist, a radical or even as moving Australia towards fascism.

While Charles Perkins was a board member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), he argued that under Howard's Prime Ministership, 'Australia verged on fascism'.<sup>54</sup> Tony Kevin, a retired diplomat and academic, described Howard as 'a disruptive and dangerous national leader' moving the nation towards 'an Australian model of fascism'.<sup>55</sup> Kingston agrees that the Howard era threatened the future of Australian democracy, describing Howard not as 'a liberal, or a Liberal, or a conservative, or a Conservative ... he's part of an ideological wrecking gang made up of radical-populist economic opportunists, one which long ago decided that robust liberal democracy was an impediment to the real elites—Big Business and Big Media—that sponsor them, rather than an essential complement to and underwriter of market capitalism'.<sup>56</sup>

Boucher and Sharpe agree with Kingston, arguing that the Howard government is neither 'liberal nor conservative in the senses it inherited from the earlier Liberal Party of Australia'.<sup>57</sup> They argue that the conservative values of moderation and gradual change were not what drove the Howard government but that it 'invoked extreme emergencies to justify radical reforms', producing enemies that took the form of terrorism, interest rates, people smugglers, lenient judges and postmodern professors.<sup>58</sup> It seems to be uncontested that Howard used fear as a political tool. However, the notion that the use of fear is limited to Howard misrepresents reality. Abjorensen argues that conservatives 'have always needed an enemy, real or imagined'.<sup>59</sup> Despite Howard's use of fear as a strong theme in the literature on the Howard government, his government is alone in

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted in M. Grattan and M. Metherell, 'Howard Worst Prime Minister Ever: Perkins', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 2000.

<sup>55</sup> T. Kevin, 'Howard's Ten Years', <http://www.tonykevin.com/Howards10Years.html>, 2007, (accessed 30 December 2011).

<sup>56</sup> M. Kingston, *Not Happy, John!: Defending Our Democracy*, Melbourne, Penguin Books, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> G. Boucher and M. Sharpe, *The Times Will Suit Them: Postmodern Conservatism in Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> N. Abjorensen, *John Howard and the Conservative Tradition*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008, p. 47.

this. Progressives also use fear to motivate, for example, the Gillard government's asylum-seeker policy, and much of the carbon-tax debate centred on fear. The use of fear in politics is issue based rather than ideologically driven.

Milne argues that 'John Howard is misunderstood ... as a large "C" conservative', describing him as a 'pragmatic but reformist market economist on one hand, but ... a conservative and social idealist on the other'.<sup>60</sup> Others also argue that it is erroneous to categorise Howard as a conservative. Kelly argues that labelling Howard a conservative occurs predominately because writers inflate the importance of Howard's position on the constitutional monarchy.<sup>61</sup> He argues that Howard recognised the requirement for political systems to change and adapt to evolving circumstances and beliefs, and claims that it is more appropriate to consider Howard's political legacy in the form of the changes and reforms that he implemented, rather than those he did not, suggesting that Howard is better understood as a change agent.<sup>62</sup>

For Cater, Howard is best understood as a 'moderniser' who built on the platform laid by his predecessors.<sup>63</sup> Cater argues that under Howard, the government became reformers and that the 'progressives became the new conservatives'.<sup>64</sup> Kunkel agrees with the view that Howard was an 'anti-establishment politician', arguing that reforming society into the form that the 'intelligentsia' defines as appropriate was not the role of government.<sup>65</sup> He argues that Howard felt that the 'political class is not better than the rest of the Australian community'.<sup>66</sup> Kelly claims that the polarised views of Howard as an economic conservative and Keating as an economic reformer cannot be sustained. He believes they were both reformers who may have had different priorities, but that the nature of their approach was reformist.<sup>67</sup>

However, for others, Howard is better understood as a radical, with Wallace claiming that he should be remembered as the 'stealth bomber of libertarian politics'.<sup>68</sup> Many commentators express the view that Howard's ideology was similar to that of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. However, according to Wallace, he is differentiated from these two politicians in his style and

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<sup>60</sup> G. Milne, 'The Howard Factor', *The Sydney Papers*, Autumn 2006, p. 91.

<sup>61</sup> P. Kelly, 2006a, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> N. Cater, 'Introduction', in N. Cater (ed.), *The Howard Factor: A Decade that Changed the Nation*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. xi.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

<sup>65</sup> J. Kunkel, 'A Speechwriter's Perspective', in K. Windschuttle, D.M. Jones, and R. Evans (eds), *The Howard Era*, Quadrant Books, Sydney, 2009, p. 48.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> P. Kelly, 'Re-thinking Australian Governance: The Howard Legacy', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2006b, p. 23.

<sup>68</sup> C. Wallace, 'Libertarian Nation by Stealth', *Griffith Review*, vol. 16, 2007, p. 124.

approach, ‘Howard never announced the revolution—he just quietly piece by piece, did it’.<sup>69</sup> Kelly dismisses the claim that the Howard government can be seen as neo-liberal, highlighting that there was no apparent commitment to the reduction of taxes and the size of government.<sup>70</sup> He notes that the size of government fell marginally during the Howard era, and the tax burden as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) increased, thereby failing to meeting two of the principle tenets of a neo-liberal government.<sup>71</sup> Kelly considers the increased income from the increased trade with China, particularly in the resources sector, and argues that had Howard been driven by a neo-liberal agenda, he could have chosen to cut taxes if he had wanted.<sup>72</sup> Kelly highlights that in practice, Howard believed in a ‘firm social safety net, kept Medicare, used government payments to lock-in interest groups and “purchase” votes, enormously expanded payments to families and, on balance, lacked the commitment to competition policy and microeconomic reform displayed by Labor in office’.<sup>73</sup> Kelly argues that Howard is better understood as an economic liberal rather than a neo-liberal.<sup>74</sup> This argument is supported by Mendes who notes the difficulty in reconciling Howard’s increase in social spending with a neo-liberalist agenda.<sup>75</sup> This paradox seems to go unnoticed in much of the literature.

Terms such as neo-liberal are used in the debate about Howard’s ideology without any discussion of their meaning, as though their meaning is non-controversial. In fact, there are extensive debates about what it means to be a neo-liberal. The term ‘neo-liberalism’ has moved from its origins as a description of the economics of the ‘Chicago School’ or authors such as von Hayek, and has become ‘an all-purpose concept, explanatory device and basis for social critique’.<sup>76</sup> The growth in the use of the term ‘neo-liberal’ is certainly not confined to the Howard debate but, as Boas and Gans-Moore argue, ‘the term is effectively used in different ways, such that its appearance in any article offers little clue as to what it actually means’.<sup>77</sup>

A growing body of comparative work on political economy is questioning why neo-liberalism or economic rationalism took hold at this time, and whether there has been a convergence in macroeconomic policy that can be understood to have occurred because of globalisation. Some of

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>70</sup> P. Kelly, ‘How Howard Governs’, in N. Cater (ed.), *The Howard Factor*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2006a, p. 633.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> P. Mendes, ‘Retrenching or Renovating the Australian Welfare State: The Paradox of the Howard Government’s Neo-Liberalism’, *International Journal of Social Welfare*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2009, p. 104.

<sup>76</sup> T. Flew, ‘Michel Foucault’s “The Birth of Biopolitics and Contemporary Neo-Liberalism Debates”’, *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 108, no. 1, 2012, p. 44.

<sup>77</sup> T. Boas and J. Gans-Moore, ‘Neo-Liberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan’, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2009, p. 139.

this work raises questions about the role of political parties and whether they continue to make a significant difference in policy or whether their importance has diminished.<sup>78</sup> This debate offers four principal reasons for the convergence of macroeconomic policy that create implications for explanations of the economic policies implemented by the Hawke, Keating, Howard and subsequent governments in Australia. The first is the role that globalisation has played in reducing policy options for governments and limiting the effect on domestic economic policies such as the adoption of Keynesian measures.<sup>79</sup> The second explanation, referred to as the structural-dependence theory, argues that economic policy privileges business as reflected in the institutional structure of capitalist states, which in turn places pressure on centre-left governments to move away from more radical economic policies.<sup>80</sup> The third reason posited in the literature for the convergence of macroeconomic policy is that politicians, in response to voter preferences, reduce the implementation of radical programmes.<sup>81</sup> Finally, the role of path dependency in the difficulty of effecting change in programmes that have been institutionally embedded means that social-democratic governments work within existing institutional frameworks.<sup>82</sup> While this debate is not central to this research, it is important to consider this point when explaining the economic policy in

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<sup>78</sup> Examples can be seen in the work of A. Gamble, 'Two Faces of Neo-Liberalism', in R. Robison (ed.), *The Neo-Liberal Revolution*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006; F. Argy, *Australia at the Crossroads: Radical Free Market or a Progressive Liberalism?*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1998; S. Goldfinch, 'Remaking Australia's Economic Policy: Economic Policy Decision-makers during the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 58, no. 2, 1999, pp. 3–20; A. Capling and B. Galligan, *Beyond the Protective State: The Political Economy of Australia's Manufacturing Industry Policy*, Oakleigh, Cambridge University Press, 1992; A. Thackrah, 'Neo-Liberal Theory & Practice: Understanding Australia's "Longest Decade"', *Arena*, vol. 32, 2009, pp. 83–100; R.B. Reich, *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy and Everyday Life*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007; J.E. Stiglitz, *Globalisation and its Discontents*, London, Allen Lane, 2002; D. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005; P. Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1990s*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1992; A. Charlton, *Ozonomics: Inside the Myth of Australia's Economic Superheroes*, Sydney, Random House, 2007.

<sup>79</sup> Examples of this work can be found in C. Boix, 'Partisan Governments, the International Economy and Macroeconomic Policies in Advanced Nations, 1960–1993', *World Politics*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2000, pp. 38–73; R. Jackman, 'The Politics of Growth in Industrial Democracies, 1974–1980: Leftist Strength or North Sea Oil?', *Journal of Politics*, vol. 49, no. 1, 1987, pp. 242–256; S. Strange, *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>80</sup> Examples of these arguments can be found in the work of C. Lindblom, *Politics and Markets*, New York, Basic Books, 1977; N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, London, Verso, 1978; G. McLennan, *Marxism, Pluralism and Beyond*, Cambridge, Polity, 1989; L. Sklair, *Globalization: Capitalism and its Alternatives*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002; A. Bieler and A.D. Morton, 'Globalisation, the State and Class Struggle: A "Critical Economy" Engagement with Open Marxism', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2003, pp. 467–499; I. Bruff, 'Making Sense of the Globalisation Debate when Engaging in Political Economy Analysis', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2005, pp. 261–280.

<sup>81</sup> This argument can be seen in the work of R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, Merlin, London, 1961; P. Dunleavy, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester, 1991.

<sup>82</sup> This argument can be seen in the work of R. Rose, *Do Parties Make a Difference?*, Chatham House, London, 1980; R. Rhodes and D. Marsh, *Implementing Thatcherite Policy*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1992; P. Pierson, 'The New Politics of the Welfare State', *World Politics*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1996, pp. 143–179; E. Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001.

Australia during the period analysed here. Commentators, including Kelly and Megalogenis, draw on a number of these arguments.

Some commentators believe Howard's ideological position cannot be defined by one set of beliefs such as conservatism or neo-liberalism, but that it is best understood as a mixture of a range of ideologies or as an ideological jigsaw. George Brandis described him as a 'bundle of contradictions'.<sup>83</sup> Brandis argues that in some ways Howard was a conservative but that he was also a radical, stating that his 'economic liberalism in government may not have been pure, but it was a core part of his political make-up that ultimately, tested the limits of what the Australian political system would bear'.<sup>84</sup>

The second major theme in the literature on the Howard government is its economic policy. It is difficult to argue that Australia did not perform well economically during the Howard era, which is noted by Hartcher as follows: as 'Howard entered his twelfth and final year in power, Australia entered its seventeenth year of continuous economic growth—a winning streak without precedent since Federation'.<sup>85</sup> Fenna agrees, stating 'that the Coalition have indeed had the enormous good fortune of governing in good times cannot be doubted ... The Howard government has enjoyed the best economic circumstance for governing in over 30 years'.<sup>86</sup> However, this consensus does not extend to the reasons underlying Australia's economic success during this period. As such, the polarisation and dichotomy persists with two enduring and opposing claims about the Howard government's economic success. Some argue that the success was due to the work of Howard and Costello, while others claim that economic success during the Howard era was principally due to the Keating legacy and luck. The amount of times these claims are made is 'stunning'.<sup>87</sup> Regardless of the lack of agreement on why Australia's economy was performing well, there is sometimes a begrudging agreement that from an economic perspective that Australia, when compared to other nations, was performing well economically, for example, Kelly states, if 'you want a Howard legacy, its unemployment low, a good surplus, inflation low most of the time, economy in reasonable shape; it's not like the comedy figure of George Bush'.<sup>88</sup>

That the sustained boom was partly due to the success of Australian fiscal policy is contentious. Howard's critics dismiss this achievement as no more than luck—the commodities

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<sup>83</sup> G. Brandis, 'John Howard and the Australian Liberal Tradition', in P. van Onselen (ed.), *Liberals and Power: The Road Ahead*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2008, p. 77.

<sup>84</sup> Kunkel, p. 49.

<sup>85</sup> P. Hartcher, *To the Bitter End: The Dramatic Story of the Fall of John Howard and the Rise of Kevin Rudd*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2010, p. 110.

<sup>86</sup> A. Fenna, 'Governing in Good Times: Fiscal Policy and Tax Reform in Australia 1996–2006', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2007, p. 346.

<sup>87</sup> P. Kelly, 'Rudd's Legacy from Old Rivals', *The Australian*, 12 September 2009.

<sup>88</sup> Quoting Kelly in P. Kelly, 2009, p. 23.

boom delivered a great deal of income and Howard's role was to spend it. Critics such as Quiggin assert that Horne's depiction of Australia as 'a lucky country, run by second-rate people who share its luck' is often used to describe the Howard government's economic policies.<sup>89</sup> The endurance of such claims is surprising given that the high commodity prices in the resources sector began approximately six years after Howard came to the Prime Ministership, and that after inheriting a budget deficit of over \$10 billion, the second budget of the Howard government returned a surplus. Hartcher states that the 'Howard Government retired the national debt, a signal accomplishment. That turnaround in the public finances was due to good policy, not good luck'.<sup>90</sup>

Much of the literature supports Hartcher's view, with former Westpac chief and Treasury Officer, David Morgan, citing the Howard government's reform of the central bank to independence as a major achievement in transforming 'Australia from one of the most inflation-prone economies to being one of the least inflation-prone'.<sup>91</sup> Morgan states that Australia's resilience in the global financial crisis rested on collective efforts, it 'is incontrovertible that the economic reforms of the last 25 years have been fundamental to Australia's strong economic position and its ability to manage the crisis. Arguments to the contrary have no intellectual or empirical standing'.<sup>92</sup> For many commentators, economic policy was the most successful aspect of the Howard government. Kunkel states that of 'all its strands, the economic dimension was the most developed. A strong record of fiscal consolidation, tax reform, workplace reform, waterfront reform and the like—all opposed by the Labor Party—provided a ready economic narrative of a government prepared to make difficult but necessary decisions'.<sup>93</sup>

There are claims within this section of the literature that Howard brutalised the country by imbuing an ideology of 'economism' with a focus on the economy, GDP and money. Clearly not everyone shared in the results of the economic boom, but these issues are more usually discussed in the literature from a social perspective. It is important when making such claims that they are anchored in disciplined comparative arguments. While this will not end the debate, and will not create any finality about causality and individual governments' relative contribution to developments, robust research and commentary allows the recognition that there are multiple causes and that there exists complexity, as opposed to the inflated claims of partisan debate and the moral simplicity of partisan views.

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<sup>89</sup> J. Quiggin, 'Economic Policy', in R. Manne (ed.), *The Howard Years*, Melbourne, Black Inc. Agenda, 2004, p. 189.

<sup>90</sup> P. Hartcher, *To the Bitter End: The Dramatic Story of the Fall of John Howard and the Rise of Kevin Rudd*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2009, p. 110.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in P. Kelly, *The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2011, p. 268.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>93</sup> Kunkel, p. 52.

It is important to acknowledge that economic and fiscal policy should not be used as the sole measure of political evaluation. This is a charge levied by many academics, and it is just for this criticism to be made. While economics is not the sole barometer of political careers and policy, it is justly recognised as an important component of the task of any government. Clearly, Howard prioritised economic and fiscal policies, which is evidenced in his inaugural lecture in the Menzies Research Centre's 1995 National Lecture Series when speaking about these issues, 'if we do not succeed there every other ideal we share will be unachievable'.<sup>94</sup>

The third category of attention in the literature focuses on the Howard government's social and cultural policies. This component of the debate reveals some of the most vitriolic and personal analysis in the literature, as well as some of the weakest methodology. For some, social and cultural issues are central to the Howard legacy, arguing that Howard did not 'imagine a better Australia. He thought the country was pretty good as it was'.<sup>95</sup> Claims such as this are common in the literature, for example, Wallace states, 'Australians did not think they were installing a government that would rule by dividing the community on race, sex, lifestyle and religious lines, reversing the social tolerance and cohesion that had progressed steadily in the postwar period'.<sup>96</sup> Manne describes *The Barren Years* as recording his 'deepening dismay about the cultural consequences of the Howard government', and that it is his attempt to explain 'the strange temper that came to dominate Australian politics during the late Howard years—the narrowing of the national vision and the souring of the popular mood'.<sup>97</sup> Manne argues that at the end of the Hawke/Keating era that 'Australia was both a very much wealthier and a very much more unequal, insecure and politically volatile nation than it had been before the era of economic rationalist reform'.<sup>98</sup> However, one must ask where the evidence is of this political volatility. How politically volatile is or was Australia at this time, and how does one measure this? It is not clear that Australia can be described as a politically volatile nation. While it is necessary to be critical of the Howard era, it is also essential that the role of academics not become lost in the process. It is fundamentally important that critical analysis uses consistent and transparent frameworks for comparison. In doing so, a range of contestable views must be considered before making a final assessment.<sup>99</sup>

Many commentators concern themselves with one of two aspects of the Howard government. There are those concerned with cultural issues such as national identity and those more

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<sup>94</sup> This speech, delivered on 6 June 1995, was one of a series of 'headland speeches' delivered by John Howard as Leader of the Opposition. The full speech can be accessed at <http://www.australianpolitics.com/tag/headland-speech>.

<sup>95</sup> Kunkel, p. 49.

<sup>96</sup> C. Wallace, 'Libertarian Nation by Stealth', *Griffith Review*, vol. 16, 2007, p. 126.

<sup>97</sup> R. Manne, *The Barren Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture*, Melbourne, Text Publishing Company, 2001, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Prasser.



interested in economic policy. It is puzzling that the scholarship accepts that this is an appropriate manner in which to consider Howard's legacy. Commentators seem to limit their concern to only one or the other in their choice, rather than adopt a holistic approach when considering the era.

Underpinning this debate is the fundamental philosophical question of the role of government. For some, government should steer the economic performance of the nation and provide individuals with the space and opportunity to live and work. There is another view that a government should set the framework for society, it should play an active role in the way a nation sees itself. The Howard government, more than any other, seems to have come to personify this debate and these competing worldviews.

A great deal of the literature offers examples of commentators conflating their own ideological and philosophical positions with their analysis of the Howard legacy. While it is true that there is always an element of bias in research, and it is not possible to separate completely the writer from their worldview, it is troubling that there is not much of an attempt to move past superficial analysis. Relying heavily on secondary sources that make judgements about the Howard government's performance has created circularity in the debate. Claims are not falsified, and so the debate cannot move forward.

The final strand of the literature to be discussed in this literature review emanates principally from political journalists rather than scholars, and provides a more nuanced view of the Howard era. This literature tends to analyse the three categories (i.e. ideology, economic policy, and the social/cultural dimension) but also more broadly notes the degree of continuity and 'sameness' of the Howard government with its predecessor and successor. This literature argues that while there are certainly differences, the similarities characterise this period. Some commentators in this group emphasise that while the rhetoric was different, the actual policy positions were mostly similar.

The commentators Megalogenis in the *Longest Decade*<sup>100</sup> and Kelly in the *March of the Patriots*<sup>101</sup> have a great deal in common, both note the continuity and similarities between Keating and Howard. This approach defies that taken by many writers who are a great deal more interested in identifying difference. Certainly, there was a difference in personal style, and a difference in interests, as one would expect; however, these differences produced passionate followers who were unable to accept the similarities and preferred to focus on the evils of the other. Many academics became enthralled in the intricacies and 'ugliness' of the 'history and culture wars' and Howard and Keating's different attitudes towards Australia's national identity, and how Australians perceive

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<sup>100</sup> G. Megalogenis, *The Longest Decade*, Melbourne, Scribe Publications, 2008.

<sup>101</sup> Kelly, *The March of the Patriots*.

themselves. While this is an interesting academic exercise, it constitutes only one part (for some an unsavoury part) of Howard's legacy. While the history and culture wars highlight difference and evoke high levels of emotion, there is a great deal to be gained by examining the policy and policy outcomes of the era rather than the polemic that was perceived in the political vision. Kelly claims that Keating and Howard took Australia in the same economic direction, and that 'polemicists from both sides will scream and protest about this claim, but that does not matter because the evidence is overwhelming'.<sup>102</sup>

Kelly's argument highlights that it may be possible to understand the Howard era as a confluence or continuation or mixing, rather than a clean break or disruption from the preceding era. Megalogenis too points to similarities between Keating and Howard as a result of their focus on restructuring the economy, as opposed to highlighting the differences in social policy.<sup>103</sup> Hawke and then Keating (after late 1991) adopted economic reforms with respect to deregulation and privatisation, which have been a focus of a great deal of the literature. Continuity occurring in economic policy seems to be a less contentious claim than continuity in other policy areas. Manne concedes that 'in the area of the economy this argument seems at least plausible' and that there was 'little difference between the economic policies of Keating and Howard'.<sup>104</sup>

No such consensus can be found on other policy issues in the broader literature. For example, in the area of foreign policy some argue that Keating and Howard adopted similar approaches, while others argue that Australia's engagement with Asia and relationship with the United States were substantially different.<sup>105</sup> Manne states that 'Keating was the most cosmopolitan, Howard the most nationalist prime minister Australia has yet seen', and sees Howard and Keating as opposite extremes in the culture wars.<sup>106</sup> The culture wars are an important topic in the academic literature dealing with the Howard era. However, there is reason to ask whether academics are confusing rhetoric with policy in this debate.

This hypothesis can also be extended to the Rudd/Gillard era. Examples of similarity between the Rudd/Gillard governments and the Howard government can be seen in some of the policy areas for which the Howard era is most emphatically criticised. For example, in the area of indigenous policy, the approach of the Rudd/Gillard governments seems to have a great deal in common with the Howard era. While the Apology can and should be seen as a shift, the policy implications were negligible. The Rudd/Gillard governments continued with the Northern Territory

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>103</sup> Megalogenis.

<sup>104</sup> Manne, 'The Insider', p. 24.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

Intervention and welfare-quarantining policies that drew criticism for the Howard government, and were cited as examples of the mean spiritedness of the Howard era. Just as the asylum-seeker issue, also used as an example by many academic writers to illustrate Howard's mean spiritedness, saw the policy of off-shore processing continued through the Rudd government, with some commentators arguing that it was toughened further under Gillard. It can be seen that the policy position continued through the successive governments but the rhetoric is different. Further, it seems that the Rudd/Gillard governments do not attract the vitriol from many academic writers that the Howard government did for its policy position.

Kelly argues that in Australia's electoral system, and particularly in election campaigns, the differences between Labor and Liberal are highlighted and preferenced, and these differences influence and determine how voters vote.<sup>107</sup> He argues that the news cycle dictates that the differences are important, claiming that this is why the differences are often 'exaggerated'.<sup>108</sup> While Kelly's argument is highly plausible it does not explain why political scientists also seem fixated on polarisation and difference at the expense of careful analysis.

while the Howard government has had to face some different issues (including the changed situation in Indonesia and East Timor), in terms of substance, there has been a large measure of continuity with the policies of its predecessor. The differences have been largely at the level of rhetoric. The two governments have seen themselves as having different emphases in terms of the way in which they protect Australia's security interests in the region. In practice, the scope those governments have had for implementing distinctive emphases has been limited by the type of external developments that they have had to respond to.<sup>109</sup>

A change in rhetoric does not necessarily indicate a change in policy. In its substance, the Howard government continued many of the policies of its predecessor. Continuity is often not explored in the literature, for example, with respect to Australia's relationships with Asia, while the rhetoric is different under Howard, the policy was substantially similar. Oppositions position themselves as different from the government (excepting for Rudd during the 2007 election campaign in which he spent a great deal of time using 'me tooisms'<sup>110</sup>), academics and polemicists look for the disruptions, and dramatic shifts, as these are more innately fascinating. However, this tactic does not justify overlooking similarities and continuity.

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<sup>107</sup> Kelly, *The March of the Patriots*, p. 630.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> D. McDougall, 'Australia and Asia-Pacific Security Regionalism: From Hawke and Keating to Howard', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2001, pp. 81–100.

<sup>110</sup> C. Kerr, 'Howard Forgot to Govern for Individuals', *Institute of Public Affairs Review: A Quarterly Review of Politics and Public Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 4, p. 30.

The findings of this research also make a contribution to an important broader debate about whether political ‘parties matter’.<sup>111</sup> The empirical literature contains many cross-sectional<sup>112</sup> and longitudinal studies<sup>113</sup> aiming to offer a clear answer, and as with many questions in political science, there are many conflicting findings. This body of work includes studies that use a range of measures as evidence of the decline or otherwise of political parties, such as diminishing voter turnout,<sup>114</sup> decreasing numbers of party members,<sup>115</sup> declining levels of party identification in the electorate<sup>116</sup> and the lowering of confidence in political parties.<sup>117</sup>

An additional question is to ask not whether parties make a difference but how quickly parties make a difference. To use Baumgartner and Jones term, do we see policy punctuations on the election of a new government or is it likely to take time before changes in policy priorities occur? Some argue that ‘Government today is not so much an opportunity for politicians to exercise their will: it is an inheritance. The legacy that a new government receives consists of a great collection of taxing and spending decisions taken and modified by politicians in the past. A government’s taxes and spending programmes are no more than the result of a single plan. A cathedral typically grows by additions; what is added by the current incumbent of a bishopric is less than what has gone before.’<sup>118</sup>

The focus of this chapter, however, has centred on three major issues emerging from the Howard literature, its polarising and vitriolic nature, the three categories of analysis: ideology, economic policy and social/cultural policies, and finally there has been discussion of work that stresses the similarities and continuities between the Hawke/Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard

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<sup>111</sup> See the work of R. Rose, *Do Parties Made a Difference*. London, Macmillan, 1980.

<sup>112</sup> D.R. Cameron, ‘The Expansion of the Public Economy: A Comparative Analysis’, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 72, 1978, pp. 1243-61; D. Swank, ‘The Political Economy of Government Domestic Expenditure in the Affluent Democracies, 1960-1980’, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, 1988, pp. 1120-50; P.L. Solano, ‘Institutional Explanation of Public Expenditure among High Income Democracies’, *Public Finance*, vol. 38, 1983, pp. 440-58.

<sup>113</sup> For examples of these studies see W.D. Berry and D. Lowery, *Understanding United States Government Growth: An Empirical Analysis of the Postwar Era*, New York, Praeger, 1987; T. R. Cusack, T. Notermans and M. Rein, ‘Political-Economic Aspects of Public Employment’, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 17, 1989, pp. 471-500; B. Frey, ‘Politico-Economic Models and Cycles’, *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 2, 1978, pp. 201-20; D.G. Golden and J.M. Poterba, ‘The Price of Popularity: The Political Business Cycle Reexamined’, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 24, 1980, pp. 696-714; M. Lewis-Beck and T.W. Rice, ‘Government Growth in the United States’, *Journal of Politics*, vol. 47, 1985, pp. 2-27; P. Murell, ‘The Size of Public Employment: An Empirical Study’, *Journal of Comparative Economics*, vol. 9, 1985, pp. 424-37; T.W. Rice, ‘The Determinants of Western European Government Growth, 1950-1980’, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 19, 1986, pp. 233-59.

<sup>114</sup> M.P. Wattenberg, *Where Have all the Voters Gone?* Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press, 2002.

<sup>115</sup> P. Mair and I. van Biezen, ‘Party Membership in Twenty European Democracies, 1980-2000’, *Party Politics*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2001, pp. 5-21.

<sup>116</sup> R. Dalton and M. Wattenberg eds., *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Economies*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>117</sup> A. Martin, ‘The Party is Not Over: Explaining Attitudes Toward Political Parties in Australia’, *International Journal of Public Opinion*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-17.

<sup>118</sup> R. Rose and T. Karran, *Taxation by Political Inertia*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1987, p. 9.

eras. It is important to note that much of the work discussing the Howard era is unsatisfactory and is populated with partisan judgements and claims. Howard is portrayed as a caricature rather than a complex, contemporary politician who held a range of views shaped by a range of ideologies. Subjecting the Howard era to critical analysis is imperative, but it is also imperative to adopt strong methodology and a balanced approach to analysis. In condemning so much of the Howard government's policies, it would be helpful for academics to draw comparisons between the policies of the Hawke/Keating era or the Rudd/Gillard era, and to acknowledge whether Howard's policies constituted a departure from these policies. Much of the evidence supports the view that continuity rather than departure is the prevailing trend of the Howard era, yet much of the literature portrays Howard as a policy disruption.

As Australia's second longest serving Prime Minister, it is clear that whether or not political scientists agree with Howard's individual policies, many Australians voted for his government in successive elections. It is clear that the Howard era is a period that merits sustained and precise research, which it is the aim of this research to provide.

### Chapter 3 Methods

The central question of this research is whether the Howard government can be considered to have created a major disruption to the policy agenda when compared to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. The previous chapter demonstrates that much of the literature about the Howard era is polemical, often unsystematic in its approach to its claims, and contains contradictory claims about the transformative nature of the Howard-led government. Having identified this problem, this chapter outlines the two key coding systems used in Chapters 5 and 6 to answer the research question. This chapter begins by presenting an overview of some of the dominant theoretical approaches to the study of agenda setting. It then outlines the two coding systems used for the analysis (PAP and CMP), and the advantages of the adoption of these approaches. This is followed by a detailed account of the data that were collected for this research, and the reasoning behind these choices. The final section of this chapter presents a discussion of the limitations of PAP and CMP.

The aim of this chapter is to determine whether Australian governments during the period 1983–2011 maintained similar sets of policy agendas over time or whether they made significant changes. It is critical for this research to measure empirically the differences and similarities in Howard's policy agenda to that of the governments led by Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard to achieve the aim of making comparisons and claims about the Howard government's transformative nature. PAP measures policy agenda to analyse how it changes over time; therefore, enabling assessments to be made about key changes in policy agenda

The results of the analysis of the PAP data, detailed in Chapter 5, demonstrate that all the governments considered from 1983 to 2011 prioritised the same policy areas and left the same group of policy issues with minimal levels of attention, thus, creating a stable policy agenda. This finding is contradictory to the dominant themes in the literature on the Howard government and raises two questions concerning the methodological implications of this research. The first question centres on concerns about whether PAP is able to measure change in the Australian policy agenda. The second question that if the Howard era cannot be characterised as a period in which the Australian policy agenda underwent significant change, how one explains the dominant claims in the literature. This research examines whether there is an alternative and more accurate way of understanding the Howard era.

To counter doubts about the accuracy of PAP, two alternative cases are analysed. First, the Whitlam era is analysed because it was a period in Australian politics that is widely acknowledged as a time of significant policy-agenda change in Australian politics. To achieve this analysis, the policy agendas of the (Harold) Holt, Gorton, McMahon, Whitlam and (Malcolm) Fraser governments must be mapped and measured. If PAP is able to detect a change in the policy agenda

of the Whitlam government, concerns about the capacity of PAP to map and measure change in the Howard case should be allayed. Second, to supplement further the macro-level analysis and to determine whether change is detected or able to be mapped by PAP, analysis is also conducted of the Blair government in the United Kingdom. There are two key reasons for choosing the Blair government for analysis. First, the United Kingdom is a Westminster system, and second, Blair was Prime Minister during a similar period to Howard, and came to power after his party had been in opposition for a long period. This comparison is designed to isolate for a 'Howard effect' in identifying whether PAP is able map change under Blair and identify where policy change occurred.

The second question that arises from the findings of the PAP analysis is how to explain the arguments in the literature that claim that Howard changed everything. The PAP analysis shows us that the Howard government prioritised a similar set of policy issues to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. To understand whether the Howard government changed the direction of policy and to offer an alternative characterisation of the Howard-led government, Chapter 6 considers whether the Howard era may be better understood as an ideological punctuation. The methodological challenge here is to determine how best to measure ideology in its relative spatial positioning of governments and policy positions during this period. The CMP scheme has been adopted to achieve this aim.

### **3.1 Policy Agendas**

Since the definition of a policy agenda is central to any attempt to explain what shapes it, and how to measure it, it is useful to begin with a definition. A policy agenda is usually defined as the set of issues that receive serious consideration in a political system at any a point in time.<sup>119</sup> A policy agenda represents a set of policy issues facing a society at a particular point that directs government action to the areas its leaders identify as necessary. Policy agenda emerges as a set of strategic choices by government about which issues to prioritise. Successful election and re-election campaigns depend on a record of well-designed and well-implemented policy agendas. Governments proactively choose which issues to prioritise, and respond to a range of policy problems as they arise. The constant need to adjust priorities means that government attention to issues changes over time.

Scholars in this area have employed the notion of the policy agenda to understand government decision making. Some landmark studies include work by Burnham, which identifies

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<sup>119</sup> J. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, New York, Harper Collins, 1985, p. 3.

critical elections as mechanisms for changing and reorganising electoral and policy approaches,<sup>120</sup> and work by Schattschneider, which argues that political parties should also be seen as mechanisms capable of changing the interest-group system by broadening conflict and increasing the number of participants in the policy process.<sup>121</sup> Cobb and Elder systematically outline the mechanisms participants use to involve new groups in the policy-making process.<sup>122</sup> Kingdon builds on this work with a theory of policy change that focuses on attention-based choice.<sup>123</sup>

From within this large body of work, a number of authors engage in examining the manner in which topics are prioritised in public policy and why attention changes over time. Some frameworks have achieved wide use in understanding continuity and change in policy agenda. These are briefly outlined below.

Some of the early frameworks on public policy argue that decision making is incremental in nature within a stable political order. Minor adjustments to the policy *status quo* are thought to be achieved through heuristic rules to which participants agree<sup>124</sup> or through a system of ‘mutual partisan adjustment’.<sup>125</sup> An ‘incrementalist’ explanation of agenda change suggests a gradual increase in attention and interest in a particular policy topic or area over time. As Kingdon argues, ‘a subject rather suddenly “hits”, “catches on” or “takes off”’.<sup>126</sup> Incrementalism has been criticised in multiple manners, including through arguments about the notion that it does not accurately reflect the nature of policy change. In addition, no consensus has been reached on a definition of incrementalism, which means it is also criticised for having a lack of consistency in measurement.

A second framework is referred to as the ‘issue-attention cycle’. Downs argues that the issue-attention cycle reflects ‘the operation of a systematic cycle of heightening public interest and then increasing boredom with major issues’.<sup>127</sup> While this is not a broad theory of agenda setting, it is reasonable to expect that some issues cycle in and out of the policy agenda depending on a variety of factors. However, this framework does not explain issues that remain a priority over time and do not experience a cycle in the attention they receive.

In response to the rational approach and that of incrementalism came the ‘garbage-can model’ of decision making.<sup>128</sup> This argues that public policy can be understood as ‘a garbage can

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<sup>120</sup> W.D. Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*, New York, WW Norton, 1970, p. 181.

<sup>121</sup> E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-sovereign People: A Realist's Guide to Democracy in America*, New York, Holt, 1960.

<sup>122</sup> R. Cobb and C. Elder, *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda Building*, Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1972.

<sup>123</sup> Kingdon.

<sup>124</sup> A. Wildavsky, *The Politics of the Budgetary Process*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1964.

<sup>125</sup> C. Lindblom, ‘The Science of Muddling Through’, *Public Administration Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1959, pp. 79–88.

<sup>126</sup> Kingdon, p. 80.

<sup>127</sup> A. Downs, ‘Up and Down with Ecology: The “Issue Attention Cycle”’, *Public Interest*, vol. 28, 1972, p. 39.

<sup>128</sup> J. March and J.P. Olsen, ‘Organizational Choice under Ambiguity’, in M.D. Cohen, J.G. March, and J.P. Olsen (eds.), *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*, Bergen, Universitetsforlaget, 1979; M.D. Cohen, J.G. March, and J.P.



into which various problems and solutions are dumped by participants. The mix of garbage in a single can depends partly on the labels attached to the alternative cans; but it also depends on what garbage is being produced at the moment, on the mix of cans available, and on the speed with which garbage is collected and removed from the scene'.<sup>129</sup> This argument rests on the notion that goals are defined, that policy makers determine the means of achieving them as they move forward in a policy process, which is by its nature unpredictable.<sup>130</sup> As such, unlike incrementalism, where policy making is the compilation or result of previous decisions, the garbage-can model asserts that the emergence of a policy agenda relies on a combination and mix of factors. Kingdon argues that to understand agenda and policy change it is important that we understand three key process streams: (1) problem recognition; (2) the formation and refining of policy proposals; and (3) politics, both individually and in the way these processes combine.<sup>131</sup>

When considering theories of agenda setting and agenda change, it is important to acknowledge an additional source of randomness in policy outcomes that is attributed to the school of thought that suggests that the 'great men of history', or as Kingdon describes them, the 'policy entrepreneurs', are like 'surfers waiting for the big wave'.<sup>132</sup> However, much of the evidence suggests that many of the 'great men' are unable to control significant events and structures, but rather, they work within the structures and can sometimes anticipate the events to some degree but they cannot control them.

The final framework to be discussed here is the 'punctuated-equilibrium model', which originated from the field of paleontology.<sup>133</sup> In opposition to the Darwinist model of evolutionary change, this model argues that the history of life can be 'characterised by rapid evolutionary events punctuating a history of stasis'.<sup>134</sup> This model of evolution has been applied across a wide range of fields and disciplines<sup>135</sup> but was first used in political science as a method of analysing the history

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Olsen, 'A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1972, pp. 1–25.

<sup>129</sup> M.D. Cohen, J.G. March, and J.P. Olsen, 'People, Problems, Solutions and the Ambiguity of Relevance', in M.D. Cohen, J.G. March, and J.P. Olsen (eds.), *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*, Bergen, Universitetsforlaget, 1979, p. 26.

<sup>130</sup> G. Mucciaroni, 'The Garbage Can Model and the Study of Policy Making: A Critique', *Polity*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1992, pp. 461.

<sup>131</sup> Kingdon, p. 87.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>133</sup> See the following works: N. Eldredge and S.J. Gould, 'Punctuated Equilibria: An Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism', in T.J.M. Shopf (ed.), *Models of Paleobiology*, San Francisco, Freeman Cooper, 1972; S.J. Gould and N. Eldredge, 'Punctuated Equilibria: The Tempo and Mode of Evolution Reconsidered', *Paleobiology*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1977, pp. 115–151; S.J. Gould, 'Punctuated Equilibrium Comes of Age', *Nature*, vol. 366, 1993, pp. 223–327.

<sup>134</sup> Eldredge and Gould, p. 108.

<sup>135</sup> S.J. Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*, Cambridge, Harvard University, 2002, pp. 80, 922, 956.

of elections and voting in the United States. It has come to replace the incrementalist model as the preferred approach when considering policy making.<sup>136</sup>

The PAP database was created with the objective of testing the accuracy of the punctuated-equilibrium model with many theorists working on PAP becoming associated with this particular theory of agenda change. Baumgartner and Jones argue that political attention is focused on one problem, and then moves to another, but that the attention is not sustained. In Kingdon's view, 'a policy window opens' and the opportunity to attend to an issue is available for a brief period before 'the window closes again'.<sup>137</sup> Baumgartner and Jones point to the existence of policy punctuations, that issues and policy attention change suddenly not in a linear or incremental manner. A fundamental theoretical component of Baumgartner and Jones model is the notion of negative and positive feedback in the processes of agenda change. They argue that negative feedback occurs when attention shifts in the policy agenda, seeing new issues raised and focused on before attention moves elsewhere.<sup>138</sup> Baumgartner and Jones claim that negative feedback loops abound, but institutions that control certain policies do not usually lose control.<sup>139</sup> This is not to say that such events do not occur, but for most issues most of the time, stability exists. The key point is that once attention has been focused and action taken, the focus moves elsewhere, and attention does not remain with this issue.

Positive feedback occurs when a shift in policy attention leads to new legislation that ensures the issue remains on the policy agenda.<sup>140</sup> This occurs in situations such as when a new agency or institution is created, resulting in the agency focusing attention on a particular issue. This attention feeds into ensuring that attention remains focused on new policy issues, thereby forming a positive-feedback loop.

It is important to stress that in politics, punctuations are different from positive and negative feedback loops. Punctuations involve having a relatively constant amount of attention paid to a particular policy issue, followed by an increase of attention before returning to the norm. The punctuations describe changes in the rate of attention, but the theory of negative feedback is that the attention returns to the norm. Conversely, positive-feedback punctuation demonstrates a change in the quantity of attention, followed by a sustained increase in the quantity of attention.

The frameworks discussed here contribute to explaining and understanding how the policy-agenda changes over time and PAP draws on the insights of these approaches.

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<sup>136</sup> D.F. Prindle, 'Importing Concepts from Biology into Political Science: The Case of Punctuated Equilibrium', *Policy Studies Journal*, no. 40, no. 1, 2012, p. 21.

<sup>137</sup> Kingdon, p. 87.

<sup>138</sup> Baumgartner and Jones, p. 254.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

### 3.2 The Policy Agendas Project

As policy agendas concern the attention paid to issues, measuring the content of policy agendas implies measuring the attention paid to specific issues in a particular period. Underpinning this approach is the belief that measurement is a critical component of argument. It is important to emphasise that the attention paid to issues is relative to the attention paid to other issues, which means that to assess a policy agenda, it is necessary to have a comparative measure of the attention paid to various issues.

PAP was created with the primary purpose of collecting and analysing data to map changes in the United States' national government's policy agenda.<sup>141</sup> As part of PAP, more than 100,000 United States government documents dating back to 1945 have been coded, enabling policy change to be considered over time. This work has had a significant influence on the study of public policy worldwide, with the coding scheme now adopted in 17 other countries.<sup>142</sup> PAP measures policy agenda to analyse how it changes over time, thereby enabling analysis and assessment of key changes in a political system.

Data gathered by PAP have been used in a variety of studies to describe issues such as the effect of new governments on policy agenda, the degree to which the policy agenda in different countries changes in similar ways at the same time, or to track specific policy issues across time and across different countries. The PAP categorisation system for public policy has produced a body of academic research that demonstrates the patterns of policy change across a range of political institutions and settings.<sup>143</sup>

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the key to understanding PAP is the large-scale datasets it has produced. The unifying element in this coding exercise is a topic code, which defines the specific topic addressed in a document or statement. Using a standardised codebook provides a method of performing historical and comparative research. Baumgartner and Jones' original coding scheme

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<sup>141</sup> F.R. Baumgartner and B.D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1993.

<sup>142</sup> An overview of the countries involved can be found at <http://www.comparativeagendas.org>.

<sup>143</sup> Examples of this work can be found in: Baumgartner, Foucault, and Francois 2006; Baumgartner, Breunig, Green-Pedersen, Jones, Mortensen, Nuytemans, and Walgrave 2009; Breunig 2006; Breunig and Koski 2006; Jennings and John 2009, 2010; John and Jennings 2010; John and Margetts 2003; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a, 2005b; Jones, Baumgartner, and True 1998; True, Jones, and Baumgartner 1999; Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009; Baumgartner 2006; Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2008; Breeman 2006; Breeman, Lowery, Poppleaars, Resodihardjo, Timmermans, and de Vries 2009; Breunig 2006; Chaques, Palau, Munoz, and Wilkerson 2008; Chaques and Palau 2009; Daviter 2009; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008; Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson 2006; Green-Pedersen 2006, 2007; Hillard, Purpura, and Wilkerson 2008; Jones and Breunig 2007; Mortensen 2005, 2006, 2007; Princen 2007, 2009, 2010; Princen and Rhinard 2006; Ramjoue and Kloti 2003; Walgrave, Soroka, and Nuytemans 2008; Walgrave and Nuytemans 2009; Walgrave and Van Aelst 2006; Walgrave, Dumont, and Varone 2006; Bevan, John, and Jennings 2011; Jennings, Bevan, and John 2011; McLaughlin, Wolfgang, Leckrone, Gollob, Bossie, Jennings, and Atherton 2010; Schiffino and Varone, 2003; Vliegthart and Walgrave 2008.

consists of 225 sub-topics, which are grouped into the 19 major topics detailed in the table below. There have been some procedural revisions to the codebook in various countries to reflect differences in the salience or nature of particular issues. The Australian Policy Agendas Project, for example, created a new sub-topic code for indigenous policy issues of health and politics. The United Kingdom's changes are also few but it is important when doing comparative work to ensure that these differences are clear. For example, the United Kingdom Policy Agendas Project chose to code immigration and refugee issues as a sub-topic of civil rights and minority issues. Elsewhere, including Australia, these issues are coded as a sub-topic code in the category of labour, employment and immigration. Decisions always need to be made in coding, and while some of the codes and sub-codes may be clearly influenced by their US roots, one of the key strengths of the PAP is that it has been able to ensure consistency in its coding scheme, keeping essentially the same coding framework thereby enabling comparative work across time and location.

**Table 3.1: The 19 Major Policy Codes**

	Major Policy Code
1	Macroeconomics
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties
3	Health
4	Agriculture
5	Labour, Employment and Immigration
6	Education and Culture
7	Environment
8	Energy
9	Transportation
10	Law, Crime and Family Issues
11	Social Welfare
12	Community Development, Planning and Housing Issues
13	Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce
14	Defence
15	Space, Science, Technology and Communication
16	Foreign Trade
17	International Affairs and Foreign Aid
18	Government Operations
19	Public Lands, Water Management, Colonial and Territorial Issues

A wide range of documents has been used for this type of research, including parliamentary questions, speeches by government officials, budget speeches, and parliamentary hearings.<sup>144</sup> In a particular speech or document to be analysed, PAP codes every sentence into one of the 19 major policy codes and one of 225 minor policy codes. To enable comparison, these are then converted

<sup>144</sup> See John, p. 980 for an overview of the various types of documents to which the coding scheme has been applied.

into proportions, for example, the proportion of the document that deals with defence, or social welfare or health. The coding is done manually and subjected to standard statistical reliability checks.

Using this coding scheme, PAP measures the attention being allocated to different issues. The data produced from this coding process can be used to understand the process of agenda setting. For example, it can show whether the priorities a government articulates at the beginning of its term are enacted in legislation or whether when a government increases its attention to particular issues in speeches do we see a corresponding increase in resource allocation.<sup>145</sup> PAP data can also be used when considering questions about the size of the policy agenda. For example, whether the number of pieces of legislation increases over time or whether newly elected governments focus on a greater number of policy issues than governments in later terms? One of the enduring questions in political science is why some issues are prioritised and others are ignored. PAP provides data that can be used to address these questions.

PAP measures the level of attention devoted to specific policy issues at different times by different governments within a particular setting. It measures what governments are focusing upon and what legislation is being passed and amended. It is important to stress that PAP measures proportionate attention and not absolute attention, and that policy punctuations do not indicate increases or decreases in the absolute amount of attention devoted to an issue. PAP's measurements reveal the tendency of policy agendas to change in a particular manner, not incrementally but rather in a manner that is characterised by long periods of drift, followed by dramatic punctuations of issues that were once marginal suddenly consuming significant amounts of attention. Policy punctuations measure increases in the rate of change of attention within a given period. Fundamental here is the assumption that the proportion of attention is a proxy for the importance a government attaches to a particular issue at a particular point in time. It follows then that increases in attention measure increases in importance of an issue at that time.

The claim that all governments are faced with demands to address issues across the full spectrum of policy areas, and that they must select which of these issue areas their government will prioritise is critical to PAP. As a result of such choices, governments place most attention on issue areas of priority to them. Therefore, coding government documents such as budget speeches allows the researcher to identify the relative importance a government places on a particular policy topic.

As mentioned in the previous section, the establishment of the PAP data collection was driven in part to test incremental accounts of policy change. An important result of the

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<sup>145</sup> K. Dowding, A. Hindmoor and A. Martin, 'The Comparative Policy Agendas Project: Theory, Measurement, Findings', forthcoming in *Journal of Public Policy*.

establishment of PAP is that policy attention has a pattern of punctuated equilibrium. ‘Punctuations are proportionate increases or decreases in attention’.<sup>146</sup> Punctuations show proportional increases or decreases in attention not changes in the absolute amount of attention to a particular issue, that is, the distribution of changes in the proportion of attention devoted to issues takes the form of a large number of very small changes accompanied by a small number of very large changes or ‘fat tail’ changes. These changes are punctuations. The argument that emerges from PAP is that there is incremental policy change evidenced by increases or decreases in changes in government attention but there are also periods of rapid change or punctuations.

### 3.3 Why the Policy Agendas Project?

In selecting a method to gather empirical analysis of policy-agenda change in the Howard era, this research had the option of adopting the approach taken by Kingdon in his landmark study on policy-making processes. Kingdon surveyed many individuals involved in policy-making processes about which issues they thought were paramount at a given point in time. By repeating this process annually for four consecutive years, he was able to track the rising and falling attention focus on specific issues over time. The advantage of this method is that it focuses on the perceptions of policy makers. However, Kingdon’s method is limited in its capacity to measure the content of policy agenda over longer periods, which limits the usefulness of the data in reflecting policy processes.<sup>147</sup>

A further disadvantage of interview methods, such as that adopted by Kingdon, is that individuals involved in specific policy making specialise in their policy portfolios and find it difficult to assess the attention paid to other policy areas. This also means that it is difficult to compare responses from interviewees between different political systems or over time.<sup>148</sup>

The application of the PAP topic-coding scheme for this research provides three distinct advantages over the approach adopted by Kingdon. These advantages mirror the disadvantages of the interview methods outlined for Kingdon’s work. First, coding documents allows this research to consider the long period involved in this research. Second, the PAP coding scheme facilitates assessment of the attention paid to issues across a wide range of policy areas. Third, and perhaps most importantly for this research, the consistent coding scheme allows comparisons to be made between different time. For example, the governments led by Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and

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<sup>146</sup> K. Dowding, A. Hindmoor and A. Martin, ‘The Comparative Policy Agendas Project: Theory, Measurement, Findings’, forthcoming in *Journal of Public Policy*

<sup>147</sup> Baumgartner and Jones, pp. 39–40; Sabtier and Weible 2007, p. 192.

<sup>148</sup> S. Princen, *Agenda-setting in the European Union: A Theoretical Exploration and Agenda for Research*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Gillard can be examined individually across individual areas of policy issues, providing a basis for empirical comparison.

In applying PAP to analyse agenda changes, three areas of the Howard era can be brought into empirical focus. The first is the mapping of the overall policy priorities of the Howard government, as well as the identification of the policy areas that consumed most of the Howard government's attention. The second is that analysis of the PAP data provides a platform for comparison with the agenda that existed before and after the Howard government. Third, the analysis of the PAP data allows identifying when agenda changes occurred, and the nature and longevity of the changes. This reveals whether the change was sustained over the duration of the Howard government, or whether there was a sudden punctuation when the Howard government was elected.

### 3.4 Comparative Manifestos Project

The second coding system employed in this research is the CMP. To explain why the dominant argument in the literature about the Howard government is that it 'changed everything', when an analysis of the policy agenda demonstrates that this is not the case, an alternative explanation for the basis of the claim is required. It is possible that the arguments about the Howard government's legacy are resting on an ideological characterisation, rather than an analysis of policy positions. The distinction between the left and right positions of political parties and governments' ideological positions along a left-right continuum as the variables explaining party competition and policy positions and agendas is fundamental to the comparative political analysis of industrialised countries.<sup>149</sup> In the literature on the Howard era, much of the comparative work is limited by a lack of consistent and clear criteria for comparison. Mair identifies six methods of estimating the policy positions of political parties: (1) *a priori* judgements involving ranking parties on the basis of their core identity origins; (2) secondary reading such as historical sources; (3) mass surveys in which respondents place themselves and parties on left-right scales; (4) elite studies such as interviews with and surveys among politicians; (5) analysis of party manifestos and other political texts; and (6) expert surveys in which experts rank parties on pre-determined issue dimensions.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Major contributions to the literature on the spatial representation of competition can be found in the work of D. Black, *The Theory of Committees and Elections*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958; A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, New York, Harper & Row, 1957; H. Hotelling, 'Stability in Competition', *Economic Journal*, vol. 39, no. 153, 1929, pp. 41–57; A. Smithies, 'Optimum Location in Spatial Competition', *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 49, no. 3, 1941, pp. 423–439.

<sup>150</sup> P. Mair, 'Searching for the Positions of Political Actors', in M. Laver (ed.), *Estimating the Policy Position of Political Actors*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp. 10–30.

*A priori* judgements and secondary sources have limited use for this research. *A priori* judgements are very broad, while historical sources depend on the subjective choices. Given the period involved in this research, the approaches based on surveys are not useful because it is not possible to conduct new surveys based on the past. This leaves only one manner of the existing approaches for constructing a long-term policy position, the analysis of political texts.

Two different approaches have emerged as alternatives for this research to construct reliable estimates of policy positions: using political texts to measure the left–right positioning of government policy, and human coding and computer-coded analysis. The two most prominent of each of these forms of analysis is the CMP coding system and Wordscore.

Wordscore is a recently developed computerised content-analysis tool that is completely automated once certain key decisions are made.<sup>151</sup> This is a dramatic and attractive alternative to the ‘qualitative’ coding of text. Less labour-intensive coding work has a great deal of appeal. Wordscore has two further advantages over other coding methods.<sup>152</sup> The first is that it is 100% reliable, whereas human coding often has multiple coders, and produces inter-coder reliability problems. The second is that a computer analyses a text with no knowledge of its context, and as such, no opinions interact with what is being coded. The key criticism of the adoption of this approach, despite it being less labour intensive, is that the political lexicon changes over time, making this approach less robust due to the length of time analysed in this research.<sup>153</sup>

The second approach and the one selected here to construct parties’ spatial position along the left–right continuum is the CMP coding system. CMP data is the most popular tool for identifying parties’ positions on the left–right ideological and policy dimension.<sup>154</sup> CMP was designed to allow coding of all the content of election programmes for the period post – World War

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<sup>151</sup> The creation of a coding scheme and dictionary is necessary for quantitative content analysis.

<sup>152</sup> Examples of the literature on the Wordscore approach can be found in M. Alex, ‘Computer-assisted Text Analysis Methodology in the Social Sciences’, ZUM Arbeitsbericht, Mannheim, Zuma, 1997.

<sup>153</sup> Examples of critiques of Wordscore can be found in K. Benoit and M. Laver, ‘Benchmarks for Text Analysis: A Response to Budge and Pennings’, *Electoral Studies*, no. 26, no. 1, 2007, pp. 130–135; K. Benoit and M. Laver, ‘Estimating Party Policy Positions: Comparing Expert Surveys and Hand-coded Content Analysis’, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 90–107; A. Hakhverdian, ‘Capturing Government Policy on the Left–Right Scale: Evidence from the United Kingdom, 1956–2006’, *Political Studies*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2009, pp. 720–745; M. Laver and J. Garry, ‘Estimating Policy Positions from Political Texts’, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2000, pp. 619–634.

<sup>154</sup> A sample of the literature on the Comparative Manifestos Project and its classification scheme can be found in I. Budge, D. Roberston, and D. Hearl, (eds.), *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analysis of Post-war Election Programs in 19 Democracies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; I. Budge, H. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara, and E. Tanenbaum with R.C. Fording, D.J. Hearl, H.M. Kim, M.D. McDonald, and S. Mendes, *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors and Governments, 1945–1998*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001; H. Klingemann, R.I. Hofferbert, and I. Budge, *Parties, Policies, and Democracy*, Oxford, Westford Press, 1994; M. Laver and I. Budge (eds.), *Party Policy and Coalition Government*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1992; D. Robertson, *A Theory of Party of Competition*, London, John Wiley & Sons, 1976; G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976.



II in a variety of countries.<sup>155</sup> The first version of the classification scheme was developed by Robertson<sup>156</sup> and has gained ‘near monopoly status in the field’.<sup>157</sup> It has been used to code more than 3,000 election manifestos issued by more than 650 parties in more than 50 countries.<sup>158</sup>

The CMP classification scheme captures policy preferences of governments incorporating 56 standard categories (see Table 3.1). Each of the categories captures issues in a manner that changes over time and can be measured across parties and governments, providing both quantification (i.e. how many statements parties or governments make), and classification (i.e. what kind of statements parties or governments make).

As with PAP, the coding unit is the quasi-sentence, which is the expression of one political idea or issue. Long sentences can be broken into quasi-sentences if the argument changes within the sentence. If different issues are treated in the same sentence, they constitute different quasi-sentences, even if they apply to the same policy field. The goal of applying quasi-sentences to the classification is to identify the overall argument in a sentence.

The basic data sought to enable these comparisons are the shares of speeches devoted to each category in a set of standardised issue areas.

**Table 3.2: Fifty-six Standard Policy Preferences in Seven Policy Domains**

Standard Policy Preferences			
Domain 1: External Relations	409	Keynesian Demand Management:	Positive
101 Foreign Special Relationships: Positive	410	Economic Growth	
102 Foreign Special Relationships: Negative	411	Technology and Infrastructure: Positive	
103 Anti-imperialism: Positive	412	Controlled Economy: Positive	
104 Military: Positive	413	Nationalisation: Positive	
105 Military: Negative	414	Economic Orthodoxy: Positive	
106 Peace: Positive	415	Marxist Analysis: Positive	
107 Internationalism: Positive	416	Anti-growth Economy: Positive	
108 European Integration: Positive	Domain 5: Welfare and Quality of Life		
109 Internationalism: Negative	501	Environmental Protection: Positive	
110 European Integration: Negative	502	Culture: Positive	
Domain 2: Freedom and Democracy	503	Social Justice: Positive	
201 Freedom and Human Rights: Positive	504	Welfare State Expansion	
202 Democracy: Positive	505	Welfare State Limitation	
203 Constitutionalism: Positive	506	Education Expansion	
204 Constitutionalism: Negative	507	Education Limitation	
Domain 3: Political System	Domain 6: Fabric of Society		

<sup>155</sup> See the Manifesto Project Database at <http://manifestoproject.wzb.eu>.

<sup>156</sup> D. Robertson, *A Theory of Party Competition*, London, John Wiley & Sons, 1976, pp. 73–75.

<sup>157</sup> M. Laver and J. Garry, ‘Estimating Policy Positions from Political Texts’, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2000, p. 620.

<sup>158</sup> W. Lowe, K. Benoit, S. Mikhaylov, and M. Laver, ‘Scaling Policy Preferences from Coded Political Text’, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2011, pp. 123–155.

301 Decentralisation: Positive	601 National Way of Life: Positive
302 Centralisation: Positive	602 National Way of Life: Negative
303 Governmental and Administrative Efficiency: Positive	603 Traditional Morality: Positive
304 Political Corruption: Negative	604 Traditional Morality: Negative
305 Political Authority: Positive	605 Law and Order: Positive
Domain 4: Economy	606 Social Harmony: Positive
401 Free Enterprise: Positive	607 Multiculturalism: Positive
402 Incentives: Positive	608 Multiculturalism: Negative
403 Market Regulation: Positive	Domain 7: Social Groups
404 Economic Planning: Positive	701 Labour Groups: Positive
405 Corporatism: Positive	702 Labour Groups: Negative
406 Protectionism: Positive	703 Agriculture: Positive
407 Protectionism: Negative	704 Middle Class and Professional Groups: Positive
408 Economic Goals	705 Minority Groups: Positive
	706 Non-economic Demographic Groups: Positive

The results of the coding are scaled to create standardised scores, thereby enabling comparison of speeches and documents of different lengths. The standard measure adopted by CMP, the Rile Scale, measures the total number of ‘right-wing’ statements minus the number of ‘left-wing’ statements as a proportion of the total number of statements within a document. The scale ranges from 100 (for a party devoting its programme exclusively to right-wing issues) to –100 (for a party devoting its programme exclusively to left-wing issues). In the following equation, R is the total number of ‘right’ quasi-sentences, L is the total number of ‘left’ quasi-sentences, and N is the total number of quasi-sentences:

$$\theta^{(s)} = \frac{R - L}{N} \times 100.$$

Of the 56 categories, only 26 are classified under CMP as left wing or right wing. Categories positioned on the left include topics such as extension of the welfare state and internationalisation, whereas topics on the right include the free-market economy, limitations of the welfare state and law and order.<sup>159</sup> It is important to understand that the determination of spatial positioning is not calculating whether there is a majority or minority of left-wing or right-wing statements, but the number of left-wing versus right-wing statements relative to all statements.

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<sup>159</sup> I. Budge, H. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara, and E. Tannenbaum, *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors and Governments, 1945–1998*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.

### 3.5 Why the Comparative Manifestos Project?

The CMP data and category scheme has been used in ‘hundreds of PhD theses, monographs and journal articles to test important questions regarding political representation, government coalition formation and spatial models of voting behaviour, and ... won the American Political Science Association’s 2003 best data set award’.<sup>160</sup> CMP offers this research a definitive, consistent and transparent approach to what constitutes left and right and facilitates meaningful comparison between the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. The object of subjecting budget speeches and Governor General speeches to quantitative content analysis here is to measure governments’ policy preferences using a common framework. The method has proven to be superior to other coding methods in its capacity to deal with judgements about what constitutes left and right over time. Gemenis states that in ‘data collection and dissemination the CMP is simply unparalleled’.<sup>161</sup>

Several left–right indices have been developed from the CMP left–right data. The Rile Score, which is the method chosen here, was developed by qualifying statements as left or right by their factor loadings. Other methods could have been adopted, for example, the ‘Vanilla’ approach by Gabel and Huber or the party-oriented approach by Franzman and Kaiser.<sup>162</sup> The Vanilla approach rests on the premise that it is difficult to make substantial claims about which issues refer to the left and which to the right; therefore, all statements are used in an unrotated factor analysis to calculate a ‘superdimension’. This approach is supported by arguments that notions of what constitutes left and right have changed over time, and depend on country-specific issues. However, the Vanilla method has no theoretical reference, with meaning and scores changing when different countries or periods are included in the analysis.<sup>163</sup> This has implications for this research because of its need to analyse data pertaining to a substantial period. As such, the decision was taken not to utilise the Vanilla approach.

The party-oriented classification is underpinned by the notion that parties determine the left–right dimension themselves.<sup>164</sup> This approach involves a regression analysis in which each quasi-sentence is the dependent variable, and the major parties are included as dummy variables.

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<sup>160</sup> K. Gemenis, ‘What to Do (and Not to Do) with the Comparative Manifestos Project Data’, *Political Studies*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>162</sup> M.J. Gavel and J.D. Huber, ‘Putting Parties in Their Place: Inferring Party Left–Right Ideological Positions from Party Manifesto Data’, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 4, 2000, pp. 94–103; S. Franzman and A. Kaiser, ‘Locating Political Parties in Policy Space: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data’, *Party Politics*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2006, pp. 163–188.

<sup>163</sup> See S. Bartolini, *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980: The Class Cleavage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; K. Benoit and M. Laver, *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*, London, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>164</sup> Franzman and Kaiser, p. 166.

The statement is seen as an issue of salience if the results are significant for either the left or the right dimension. If the results are insignificant, the issue is considered as a valence issue, and is not considered relevant for the party's position. Once the salient issues have been identified, the left issues are subtracted from the right issues, as in the Rile Score procedure, and then divided by the sum of all issues. This can be problematic, as this is not a transparent or replicable process. It also presents difficulties due to the manner in which the method changes party positions when using different periods, even for a continuing time series. This is undesirable for the objectives of the analysis of this research.

As outlined, there are few alternative manners for generating data for comparing political or ideological positions across time. There exists much commentary, anecdotal evidence and unsystematic sampling, but few means to measure the distance between parties or governments and changes over time. As a coding method, CMP achieves internally and externally reliable results. Internally, there is a high level of inter-coder agreement in coding decisions that some attribute to training methods, and the application of the coding manual.<sup>165</sup> Results obtained through the adoption of the CMP coding scheme are also consistent with results derived from other coding techniques and expert surveys that produce high levels of external reliability.<sup>166</sup>

The benefits of the CMP coding scheme for this research are three-fold: (1) it offers consistent and clear criteria for comparison of the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it; (2) it provides a method by which to measure governments' policy positions preferences; and (3) the CMP achieves reliable results. These traits enable this research to overcome some of the shortcomings in the literature that were identified in the previous chapter, and allow for an alternative conception of the Howard government to be formulated, engaged with, considered and debated.

### 3.6 Instruments

To assess the balance of change and the continuity in the policy agenda under the Howard government, a data set has been created that captures the content of different venues of agenda setting and policy making. This data set is a combination of the researcher's own coding work, as well as that of the Australian PAP and the PAP in the United Kingdom, and includes data from the following sources:<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> A. Volkens, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of Approaches to Measuring Policy Positions of Parties', *Electoral Studies* vol. 26, no. 1, 2007, p. 110.

<sup>166</sup> A. Volkens, J. Bara, and I. Budge, 'Data Quality in Content Analysis: The Case of the Comparative Manifestos Project', *Historical Social Research*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2009, p. 241.

<sup>167</sup> The United Kingdom PAP can be found at [www.policyagendasuk.wordpress.com](http://www.policyagendasuk.wordpress.com).

- budget speeches delivered by the Federal Treasurer from 1983 to 2011 (involving coding 6,255 individual sentences)
- Acts of Parliament from 1983 to 2011 (obtained from Australian PAP and then blind coded by the researcher, involving coding 4,890 Acts)
- Governor General speeches from 1983 to 2008 (obtained from Australian PAP)
- budget speeches delivered by the Federal Treasurer from 1966 to 1978 (involving coding 5,531 individual sentences)
- Governor General speeches from 1966 to 1978 (obtained from Australian PAP)
- speeches from the Throne from 1979 to 2008 (obtained from United Kingdom PAP)
- Acts of the United Kingdom Parliament from 1979 to 2008 (obtained from United Kingdom PAP)

The CMP coding includes data from the following sources:

- budget speeches delivered by the Federal Treasurer from 1983 to 2011 (involving coding 6,255 individual sentences)
- Governor General speeches from 1983 to 2011.

Political parties in Australia, unlike in many other Western democracies, do not publish regular manifestos containing their policy positions on a range of issues. As such, three different sources of information have been selected to contribute to the data set for the PAP analysis: Acts of Parliament, budget speeches and Governor General speeches. Hogwood and Peters argue that in some ways laws are the most definitive indicators of policy change, as there is always a legal aspect to policy change in industrialised countries.<sup>168</sup> While enacted legislation (Acts of Parliament) cannot completely capture the approach of a government, as there are many measures that are enacted that do not require legislation to introduce a reform, it is one factor through which to capture a succinct and useful ‘snapshot’ of the policy agenda.

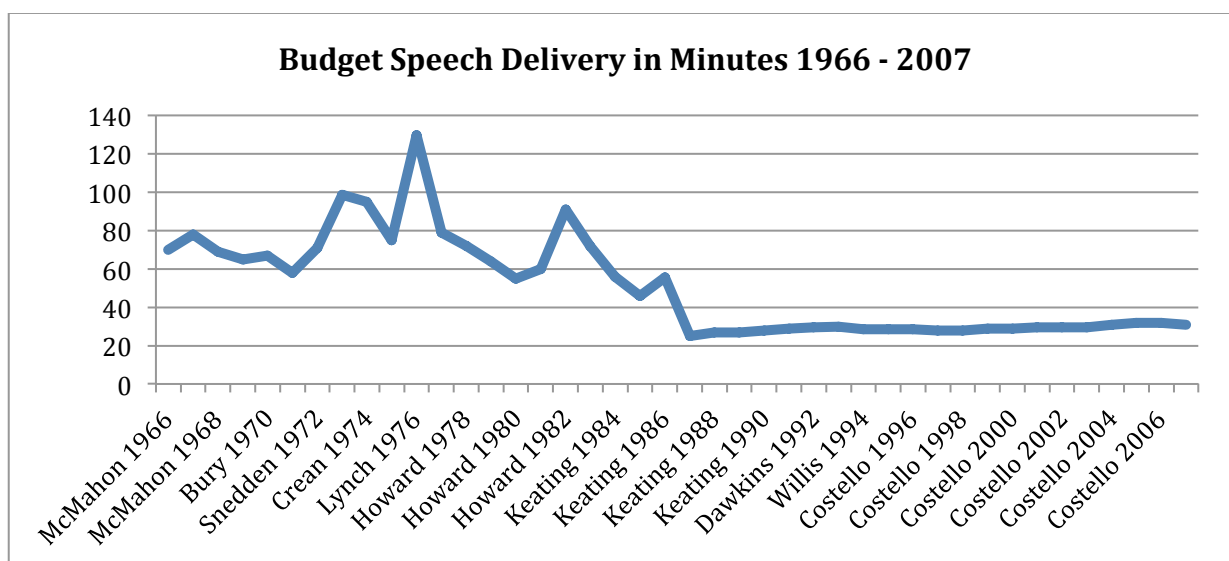
A budget speech is delivered annually by the Federal Treasurer, providing practical evidence of a government’s priorities in the allocation of (or reduction of) financial resources to policy areas. In his budget speech in 1973, Frank Crean asserted that ‘the budget is not simply an economic document. It is also an important instrument whereby we give effect to our goals and aspirations’.<sup>169</sup> As evidenced in Figure 3.1, the length of budget speeches since Keating’s 1996

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<sup>168</sup> B.W. Hogwood and B.G. Peters, *Policy Dynamics*, Brighton, Wheatsheaf, 1983.

<sup>169</sup> F. Crean, ‘Budget Speech, 1973–74’, 1973, <http://www.worldcat.org/title/budget-speech-1973-74/oclc/153810223>.

speech has been remarkably constant.<sup>170</sup> This is despite the fact that there is no time requirement time for the Treasurer in making the budget speech.



**Figure 3.1: Budget Speech Delivery in Minutes (1966–2007)**

The Governor General speech can be seen as a statement of political intention. Importantly, both the Governor General speeches and the budget speeches are political events used by Prime Ministers to position their government. In addition, both types of speeches are suitable for coding, in part because their formats have remained largely unchanged over the period analysed in this research. Dowding, Faulkner, Hindmoor and Martin argue that Governor General speeches are particularly suitable for coding because their format has remained largely unchanged over time.<sup>171</sup> While these documents do not represent a definitive set of all policy statements made by all the governments under analysis in this research, it is reasonable to argue that they produce a reliable set of data for the analysis.

This data source serves as the population from which policy punctuations and policy shifts will be identified. To analyse the PAP data, a similar method to that used by Jennings and John's work on large changes in the agenda of governments in the United Kingdom is employed by this research.<sup>172</sup> One of the first tasks is to extract the key policy changes from the data series. This is achieved through two methods. The first method takes the proportional percentage change, which is  $Y = [(X_t/Z_t) - (X_{t-1}/Z_{t-1})] / (X_t/Z_t)$ . This is equal to the proportional change in the percentage of policy units (e.g. budget-speech mentions, Acts of Parliament) within the total agenda space ( $Z$ ). For

<sup>170</sup> Collated by the Chamber Research Office, House of Representatives, 31 May 2007, [http://www.peo.gov.au/students/fss/quirky/budget\\_speech\\_times.pdf](http://www.peo.gov.au/students/fss/quirky/budget_speech_times.pdf), (accessed 1 August 2012).

<sup>171</sup> Dowding, Hindmoor, Iles, and John, p. 463.

<sup>172</sup> W. Jennings and P. John, 'Punctuations and Turning Points in British Politics? The Policy Agenda of the Queen's Speech, 1940–2005', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2010, pp. 561–586.

example, when the overall agenda space remains stable at 20 sentences within a speech, an increase from one (5%) to four (20%) sentences is equal to a proportional percentage increase of 300%. The second method is the proportional count change, which is the proportional change in the number of policy units (e.g. budget-speech mentions, Acts of Parliament) in a given year (t) relative to the number in the previous year (t-1). For example, an increase from one to four Acts of Parliament is equal to a proportional increase of 300%:  $Y = (X_t - X_{t-1}) / X_{t-1} \times 100$ .

### 3.7 Limitations of Research Design

As with all methodological choices, there are limitations to both PAP and CMP. Before addressing specific concerns about each of these approaches, it is important to recognise a general concern about the consistency in moving from an abstract coding scheme to coding decisions, and the necessity for coders to make choices about how statements are categorised. These choices are not always self-evident because in reality, documents do not always conform to neat categories and sometimes, they can quite plausibly be coded under a different category. If different coders make such categorisations differently, the applied codes will not have the same substantive meaning. This research has dealt with this potential problem in three ways. First, the majority of the coding has been conducted by only one coder, the researcher. As such, consistency is less problematic than if a group of coders had conducted the coding work. Second, the coding performed by others (the PAP coding of the Governor General speeches) has been systematically checked to ensure consistency in the coding decisions. Finally, four budget speeches (1984, 1989, 1996, 2007) were blind coded using the Australian PAP Codebook as an added test for coder reliability. This produced a very high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha test (of internal consistency) performed. The result:  $\alpha = 0.942$  means that the two coders coded the sentences of the budget speeches in the same manner 94% of the time.<sup>173</sup>

Underpinning the PAP approach are two assumptions that should be critically assessed. The first is whether the relative level of attention paid to a policy code or issue reflects the priority of an issue. It is important to understand that the PAP uses attention as a proxy. The second assumption is that the application of a single topic scheme allows for comparison between different times and places. For this research, the first assumption is the most relevant. For example, Kingdon found no correlation between the number of hearings in the United States Congress devoted to a certain issue

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<sup>173</sup> For further explanations of the test, see L.J. Cronback, 'Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests', *Psychometrika*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1951, pp. 297–334; W. Revelle and R. Zinbarg, 'Coefficients Alpha, Beta, Omega, and the Gib: Comments on Sijtsma', *Psychometrika*, no. 74, no. 1, 2009, pp. 145–154; R. Elsinga, M. Te Grotenhuis, and B. Pelzer, 'The Reliability of a Two-item Scale: Pearson, Cronbach or Spearman-Brown?', *International Journal of Public Health*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2013, pp. 637–642.

and the answers of interviewees to a question about which issues were most important. Therefore, Kindon argues that hearings may be held to satisfy a specific and small constituency or because of routine renewals.<sup>174</sup>

This may also apply to some Australian documents in that speeches may highlight policy issues for a range of reasons, sometimes to satisfy an electoral issue, or to divert attention away from an alternative issue, rather than an attempt to elevate a particular policy issue in importance on the agenda. In addition to this concern, counting documents implies that all documents have equal status of importance as far as policy-agenda status is concerned. Therefore, care is needed when using coded documents to make strong claims about the policy-agenda status of specific issues at specific points in time. The need to supplement quantitative measures with detailed case studies is accepted by many scholars who adopt PAP.<sup>175</sup> For the purpose of this research, the coded documents used provide an understanding of the range of issues discussed by the governments examined. As such, the issues that are the subject of the official documents are considered to reflect the range of legitimate concerns in the political system, and the prioritisation of these concerns in the government's policy agenda.

While the CMP coding system and database enjoys widespread adoption and enduring popularity within the literature, it is not completely uncontroversial. There has been some criticism of CMP data in recent years. Such criticism can be grouped into two principal areas: (1) theoretical underpinnings of the coding scheme; and (2) document selection.

The first criticism centres on debates about the use of the terms related to a left–right continuum as a manner of describing voter behaviour and political ideology in political discourse. The continuing relevance and appropriateness of the traditional left–right interpretation of ideology in electoral politics is contested, with some arguing that ‘such a simple description has become increasingly untenable’.<sup>176</sup> Inglehare takes this line of argument, identifying cleavages such as postmaterialism, and a broader conception of postmodern attitudes as a more accurate depiction of modern politics.<sup>177</sup> He argues that Western industrial democracies have moved past modernisation,

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<sup>174</sup> Kindon, pp. 243–244.

<sup>175</sup> S.B. Pralle, ‘Timing and Sequence in Agenda-setting and Policy Change: A Comparative Study of Lawn Care Pesticide Politics in Canada and the US’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 13, no. 7, 2006, pp. 987–1005; S.L. Resodiardjo, *Crisis and Change in the British and Dutch Prison Services: Understanding Crisis-reform Processes*, Basingstoke, Ashgate, 2009; S. Walgrave and F. Varone, ‘Punctuated Equilibrium and Agenda-setting: Bringing Parties Back in: Policy Change after the Dutroux Crisis in Belgium’, *Governance*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2008, pp. 365–395.

<sup>176</sup> D. Charnock and P. Ellis, ‘Postmaterialism and Postmodernization in Australian Electoral Politics’, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2004, p. 45.

<sup>177</sup> Examples can be found in R. Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997; R. Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990; R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977.



and by using the data from the World Values Survey, he argues that nations can be placed along a continuum of modernisation and postmodernisation.<sup>178</sup>

Inglehart defines this postmodernisation phase of development as existing when the ‘emphasis shifts from maximizing economic gains to maximizing subjective well-being’.<sup>179</sup> Inglehart argues that postmodern values, in addition to postmaterial values include factors such as tolerance and permissiveness, and that the shift towards postmaterialism is ‘only one part of a broader shift towards postmodern values, involving changing orientations towards politics, work, family life, religion, and sexual behavior’.<sup>180</sup> As a result of this shift in values, Inglehart asserts that a range of issues such as the environment, ethnic diversity, women’s issues and gay and lesbian rights have been re-prioritised.<sup>181</sup> He advocates that in response to this shift there is a need for a postmodern political dimension to understand the declining priority of the economic concerns that are central to left–right politics.

An alternative account posits that rather than the traditional left–right descriptor, terminology such as the ‘libertarian–authoritarian continuum’ would better depict party competition, advocating that a left-libertarian–right-authoritarian diagonal line within the left–right continuum would provide a more accurate representation of the spatial positioning of political parties.<sup>182</sup> Kitschelt and Hellemans offer four hypotheses: irrelevance, persistence, transformation and pluralisation on the status of the left–right dimension.<sup>183</sup> The irrelevance hypothesis advances the notion that the left–right concept of politics is irrelevant because the terms are too firmly held in the history of industrial society, making the dimension immune to new meaning. The persistence hypothesis suggests that ‘old and new meanings of left and right are merging in one superideology’.<sup>184</sup> Transformation is linked to Inglehart’s theory of a postmaterial value change where non-material priorities replace material and economic issues in advanced economies because citizens expect a certain level of material wellbeing, and as such, are able to focus on postmaterial values such as equity, free speech and aesthetics, thus, stripping meaning from the left–right

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<sup>178</sup> Inglehart 1997.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., pp. 4, 237, 246.

<sup>182</sup> For examples of this argument, see O. Hellevik, ‘Postmaterialism as a Dimension of Cultural Change’, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1993, pp. 211–233; H. Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1995; H. Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994; O. Knutsen, ‘Party Choice’, in J.W. van Deth and E. Scarbrough (eds.), *The Impact of Values*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 461–491.

<sup>183</sup> H. Kitschelt and S. Hellemans, ‘Left–Right Semantics in the New Politics Cleavage’, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1990, p. 215.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

dimension.<sup>185</sup> The pluralisation hypothesis argues that rather than new meanings displacing traditional notions of the left–right dimension, this dimension is supplemented by other dimensions denoting political belief systems. This production of multiple meanings can be understood as a ‘sign that the age in which simple polarities (market vs. state; state vs. community; community vs. market) could define the principles of political ideology is coming to an end’.<sup>186</sup>

While the debate about the appropriateness of the left–right dimension in modern politics continues, the use of the terms in both academic and the broader discourse continues unabated. It is important to note that alternative schemas are not independent of the concept or continuum of the left–right vision of politics. It is true that there may be more nuanced manners of thinking about and expressing views related to policy positions and ideology; however, the left–right continuum is not irrelevant because it retains meaning to most people. It is valuable because many academics, journalists, experts and voters use it regularly in a ‘mass communicating world characterised by mass politics a maximum of visual simplicity coupled with a maximum of manipulability represent an almost unbeatable combination’.<sup>187</sup> Others argue that the left–right distinction remains a useful device due to ‘the advantage of parsimony as the single most powerful predictor of mass attitudes across a range of social and economic issues’.<sup>188</sup>

The left–right dimension is a simple concept but it convincingly combines simplicity with explanatory scope, which is precisely why the use of this dimension has had such wide and sustained usage. While there are many complex factors that may undermine the validity of applying the left–right continuum to describe political beliefs, this continuum reflects the manner in which politics often works in reality. Politics is a competition of ideas, it is about choices, it is about change and a commitment to the *status quo*, it is about opposition and government, particularly in Australia with its two-party system dominated by the two major political parties. This continuum is not inconsistent with the climate of the two-party competition and political polarisation in Australia. While there are valid arguments about the simplistic nature of the left–right descriptor, it has real application in orienting political beliefs. If additional dimensions were to be invoked, it is possible they would provide more precise explanations but this cannot occur without affecting the ratio between the number of independent variables, and the explained variances, and may not lead to a greater understanding of causality and explanation.

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<sup>185</sup> See Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997.

<sup>186</sup> Kitschelt and Hellemans, p. 234.

<sup>187</sup> Sartori, p. 342.

<sup>188</sup> R.M. Coughlin and C. Lockhart, ‘Grid-Group Theory and Political Ideology: A Consideration of their Relative Strengths and Weaknesses for Explaining the Structure of Mass Belief Systems’, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1998, p. 33.

The second group of concerns about the CMP centre on the documents chosen for coding. The CMP method has historically analysed political manifestos but there are many examples of other documents being used for analysis, for example, the use of Governor General speeches in Dowding, Faulkner, Hindmoor and Martin's work.<sup>189</sup> This research has chosen to apply the CMP coding scheme to the analysis of budget speeches, Acts of Parliament and Governor General speeches and while this choice is not uncontroversial, it is appropriate for two principal reasons. First, political parties in Australia do not produce a manifesto document but use a variety of speeches and other documents to communicate their policy programme. Second, it can be argued that these documents, while not manifestos *per se*, reflect Australian governments' policy priorities.

The length of the documents used for analysis has implications for the reliability of CMP results. Benoit, Laver and Mikhaylov (2009) demonstrated that the reliability of CMP results can be affected by the length of the document, or more specifically, by the brief nature of some documents.<sup>190</sup> This is not problematic this research, as Governor General speeches and budget speeches constitute substantial pieces of text (e.g. the budget speeches in the period examined by this research contain on average 186 policy quasi-sentences).

### 3.8 Conclusion

The design of this research provides a mechanism for addressing and overcoming the limitations in the literature identified in Chapter 2 in two manners. First, it provides a consistent methodology that maps and measures policy agendas to support comparative work. This means that when policy agendas change in their prioritisation of issues or problems, it will be observable in the data. Such shifts are visible through the systematic quantitative measurement of variables. Second, the methodology adopted by this research allows engagement with and argument about the accompanying analysis, thereby removing the circular nature that characterises much of the literature on the Howard era.

It is important to recognise that this research does not claim that its findings settle all possible empirical disputes about the status and effect of the Howard government. However, this approach provides a sound methodological base on which to conduct debate and test claims. This chapter does not argue that the evidence provided about spatial positioning or policy-agenda change using the CMP and PAP methods should displace informal judgement and commentary, rather it argues that these two approaches are complimentary to the qualitative body of work that exists.

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<sup>189</sup> K. Dowding, N. Faulkner, A. Hindmoor, and A. Martin, 'Change and Continuity in the Ideology of Australian Prime Ministers: The Governor-General's Speeches, 1946–2010', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2012, pp. 455–472.

<sup>190</sup> K. Benoit and M. Laver, 'Estimating Party Policy Positions', p. 93.

## Chapter 4 Howard's Agenda

This chapter presents a systematic overview of the content of the policy agenda of the Howard government. It provides an understanding of the policy developments to provide a focused view of the Howard government's agenda. This chapter does not engage in qualitative judgements about policy, outlining policy 'successes' or 'failures', or attempting to resolve debates about the value of particular policies, rather it presents a portrayal of the reforms and changes introduced during the Howard government's time in office. It does this by first providing a brief overview of some key events during the Howard government's term in office. It then identifies some of the initiatives of the Howard government in each of the 19 major policy-topic codes of PAP. This chapter is designed to assist in interpreting the quantitative descriptions of the patterns of policy attention that are presented in Chapter 5.

Schattschneider notes that some 'issues are organized into politics and some issues are organized out'.<sup>191</sup> This is true for all governments. As highlighted in Chapter 2, there are many claims and judgements about the policy agenda of the Howard government such as it privileging business and economic interests, and pursuing free-trade policies<sup>192</sup> over social policy. Horne argues that one of the 'defining characteristics of the Howard years was an attempt to change the agenda (backwards from what it became in the Whitlam and Fraser years)'.<sup>193</sup> Howard assessed his government's policy agenda as follows:

social policy reform and progress were the quiet but impressive achievers of the Howard Government. Economic management and national security were such major preoccupations of the Government that there was less focus on other areas. Yet the accomplishments on the social front were formidable ... good economic policy was not an end in itself ... economic changes made no sense unless there was a human dividend.<sup>194</sup>

While much of this commentary is instructive, there is a lot it does not tell us about the Howard government's policy agenda. The Howard government was in office for over 11 years, winning four elections, bringing down 12 budgets, and passing 1,934 pieces of legislation. It is not possible for this research to detail every Act of Parliament, every budget measure or every initiative of a government that held office for this period. As such, this chapter has necessarily been selective in its choice of issues it highlights. The Table 4.1 presents a summary of some major events that

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<sup>191</sup> E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-sovereign People: A Realist's Guide to Democracy in America*, New York, Holt, 1960.

<sup>192</sup> These arguments can be found in P. Mendes, 'Australian Neoliberal Think Tanks and the Backlash against the Welfare State', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, vol. 51, 2003, pp. 29–56; E. Jones, 'The Ascendancy of Idealist Economics in Australia', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, vol. 50, 2002, pp. 44–71.

<sup>193</sup> D. Horne, *Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*, Melbourne, Viking, 2001, p. 123.

<sup>194</sup> J. Howard, *Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Autobiography*, Sydney, HarperCollins, 2010, p. 486.

occurred during the period of the Howard government and provides context for the analysis that follows.

**Table 4.1: Significant Events during Howard Government's Term in Office<sup>195</sup>**

Date	Event
11 March 1996	Howard sworn in as Prime Minister; first Coalition government for 13 years
28 April 1996	Port Arthur Massacre—35 people killed at Port Arthur, Tasmania. In response, Howard introduced a scheme for uniform gun laws across Australia and a buy-back scheme for privately owned guns
11 December 1996	Telstra Sale—Bill passed Parliament to sell one-half of Telstra
23 December 1996	Wik Native Title—High Court decision that pastoral leases did not extinguish native title. Howard proposed a 10-point plan in April the following year in response to the decision and to calm land owners' fears about the implications of the decision
1 January 1997	Restructure of industrial relations—provisions of the <i>Workplace Relations Act 1996</i> came into effect
11 April 1997	One Nation—Pauline Hanson launched a political party on a platform of tougher immigration restrictions
26 May 1997	<i>Bringing Them Home</i> —Howard tabled the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's report into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families
3 October 1998	The Coalition government retained office at federal election
16 July 1999	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act</i> passed
20 September 1999	East Timor—2,500 Australian defence personnel led a United Nations peace-keeping team in East Timor
6 November 1999	Australians vote against a proposal for Australia to become a republic
1 July 2000	GST introduced
15 September 2000	Sydney Olympic Games
1 January 2001	Centenary of Federation
29 June 2001	Governor General appointed—Dr Peter Hollingworth
29 August 2001	Tampa—Norwegian ship rescued refugees fleeing Afghanistan and the Middle East from a sinking boat in the Indian Ocean. The boat crossed into Australian waters despite being refused entry by the Australian government
11 September 2001	Hijacked United States aeroplanes were flown into the World Trade Centre in New York and into the Pentagon in Washington
10 November 2001	Howard government retained government at federal election
12 October 2002	Bali bombing—202 people killed in a bomb attack at a nightclub in Bali. Almost half of those killed were Australians
18 March 2003	Australia agreed to a request from the United States for Australia to send defence personnel to Iraq
28 May 2003	Governor General (Hollingworth) resigned
22 June 2003	Governor General appointed—Major General Michael Jeffery
25 June 2004	National Water Initiative—COAG agreed to the National Water Initiative and the establishment of the National Water Commission

13 August 2004	Australia – Unites States Free Trade Agreement
9 October 2004	Howard retained government at federal election
26 December 2004	Tsunami—disaster affecting many countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Australia and Indonesia formed a partnership to assist in Indonesia's recovery
1 July 2005	Senate majority—the Coalition attained a majority in both houses of Parliament
15 September 2005	Legislation passed for the sale of Telstra with AUD\$1 billion of the revenue allocated to environmental initiatives
1 October 2005	Indonesia bombing—20 people killed and 120 injured after a suicide-bomb attack in Jakarta
27 March 2006	WorkChoices introduced
8 September 2006	APEC held in Australia
24 November 2007	Coalition lost government at federal election

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of policy initiatives taken by the Howard government in each of the 19 policy-topic codes of the PAP coding scheme, beginning with macroeconomic policy.

#### 4.1 Macroeconomics

Economic management and economic policy became emblematic of the Howard government, which was defined by Australia's longest economic expansion, with 16 years of continuous economic growth. Eleven of these years occurred in Howard's term of government. Howard described the post-1983 era in Australia as an age that rested on five pillars: financial deregulation, the dismantling of the tariff wall, industrial-relations deregulation, fiscal consolidation and tax reform.<sup>196</sup> When considering the policy agenda of any government, macroeconomics is a significant and dominant policy area. Fenna describes fiscal and tax policy as the 'touchstones of the Howard Government'.<sup>197</sup> It is also a policy area that encapsulates the dichotomy of much of the commentary about the Howard government.

Many commentators claim that Howard was fortunate that his time in office coincided with a period of economic boom,<sup>198</sup> while others argue that Howard created an environment whereby the nation would benefit from its economic fortunes. Horne argues that there is 'no such thing as a purely economic policy, any more than there is, out there, an economy working in itself, not part of the rest of the world. All economic policies are social policies'.<sup>199</sup> There is validity in Horne's

<sup>196</sup> P. Kelly, 'We of Never Never Land', *The Weekend Australian*, 8 September 2001, p. 243.

<sup>197</sup> A. Fenna, 'Governing in Good Times: Fiscal Policy and Tax Reform in Australia 1996–2006', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2007, p. 329.

<sup>198</sup> See A. Fenna, 'Governing in good Times: Fiscal Policy and Tax Reform in Australia 1996–2006', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2007, pp. 329–349.

<sup>199</sup> D. Horne, *Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*, Melbourne, Viking, 2001, p. 37.

viewpoint: decisions in economic policy have consequences in other policy areas but no policy area is quarantined from this. It can also be argued that all social policy is economic policy, as social policies need to be financed and therefore, have economic consequences. Accepting that policy issues become entwined and entangled with other policy areas does not mean that economic policies should not be analysed or interrogated.

The Howard government came to office in 1996 with an AUD\$10 billion budget deficit and Commonwealth-government debt of \$96 billion or 18.5 per cent of GDP.<sup>200</sup> The newly elected Howard government promised a balanced budget over the cycle, that asset sales would be used to reduce government debt, and that there would be the introduction of a Charter of Budget Honesty, which required a series of annual budget-outlook reports to be updated prior to elections.

The Howard government achieved a balanced budget, and then a surplus in two years after taking office. This was followed by further surplus budgets and the retirement of all accumulated Commonwealth-government debt. Howard-government economic policy began with a programme of deficit-reduction measures and spending cuts, moved to allocating budget surpluses and asset-sales revenues, and finally created various ‘future funds’.<sup>201</sup> By its final term, the Howard government was one of a few in the world with budget surpluses. Most other developed nations had not eliminated government debt during this period. Ian Macfarlane described the Howard government’s fiscal policy as ‘virtually the best in the OECD area’.<sup>202</sup>

The recession in the early 1990s had lowered inflation but the formal agreement in 1996 that gave the Reserve Bank independence, established a new system, transferring power from the government to the central bank. The rationale behind the decision was that moving interest-rate decision making to the central bank would facilitate a low-inflation economy. Accrual accounting and the introduction of the *Charter of Budget Honesty Act 1998* further highlighted the Howard government’s priority of fiscal probity.

Despite the Coalition’s 1996 pre-election promise that it would not introduce a Goods and Services Tax (GST), it did so after taking the policy to the 1998 election. The GST was introduced in 1999–2000, with some commentators identifying it as the biggest tax reform in Australia for half a century and the ‘single most significant policy issue of the Howard government’s first two terms’.<sup>203</sup> Removing an indirect tax system, a new income tax rate was applied covering 80% of taxpayers. Other changes included a one-off increase in all welfare payments to guarantee

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<sup>200</sup> K. Di Marco, M. Pirie, and W. Au-Yeung, ‘A History of Public Debt in Australia’, *Economic Roundup*, no. 1, 2009.

<sup>201</sup> For an understanding of the Howard government’s economic policies and actions, see P. Costello with P. Coleman, *The Costello Memoirs*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2008, pp. 90–146. For academic analysis, see

<sup>202</sup> Cited in P. Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 91.

<sup>203</sup> R. Eccleston, ‘The Howard Government, Capital Taxation and the Limits of Redistribution’, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2007, p. 352.

compensation for the introduction of the GST, special assistance for the aged, a cut in the corporate tax rate and the introduction of a new quarterly system for tax payments for business.

While the introduction of the GST was a controversial and wide-ranging reform, it coincided with the Ralph Review of Business Taxation, which resulted in significant changes to the business tax policy and the processes that accompanied it.<sup>204</sup> The objectives of the changes were to improve the competitiveness and long-term effectiveness of the business tax system.<sup>205</sup> The most significant changes were the decrease of the company tax rate from 36 to 30% and halving the capital-gains tax rate.<sup>206</sup>

## 4.2 Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties

This policy area was not a focus for the Howard government. This is not to say this policy experienced no activity, but it was not afforded high priority in the relative attention it received. Unlike many other liberal democracies, Australia has no Bill of Rights to protect human rights. These protections are found in the Constitution of Australia, Australian common law and Acts of the Commonwealth or state or territory Parliaments. The issue of whether Australia needs a Bill of Rights is a long-running debate in Australia, with some people such as the Former Chief Justice Sir Anthony Mason arguing the following perspective:

Australia's adoption of a Bill of Rights would bring Australia in from the cold, so to speak, and make directly applicable the human rights jurisprudence which is developed internationally and elsewhere. That is an important consideration in that our isolation from that jurisprudence means that we do not have what is a vital component of other constitutional and legal systems, a component which has a significant impact on culture and thought, and is an important ingredient in the emerging world order that is reducing the effective choices open to the nation state.<sup>207</sup>

The debate on whether Australia needs a Bill of Rights and the shape such a Bill might take is not important to this research other than to provide some context for this policy issue in Australia.<sup>208</sup>

Some pieces of legislation dealing with human rights were passed during the Howard government's time in office. These include *the Human Rights Legislation Amendment Act 1999*; the creation of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in 2000; the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Act 1999*; *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission*

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>205</sup> For further detail on the changes, see N. Warren, *Tax: Facts, Fiction and Reform*, Sydney, Australian Tax Research Foundation, 2004, p. 188.

<sup>206</sup> Eccleston, p. 352.

<sup>207</sup> A. Mason, 'Rights, Values and Legal Institutions: Reshaping Australian Institutions', *Australian International Law Journal*, vol. 13, 1997.

<sup>208</sup> For a useful overview of Australia's civil rights history, see [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au).



*Amendment Act 2002*; the *Sex Discrimination Amendment (Pregnancy and Work) Act 2003*; the *Age Discrimination Act 2004* and the *Age Discrimination Amendment Act 2006*.

Some commentators argue that the Howard government's Acts of Parliament or other measures specifically related to this PAP coding area were not as important as the implications of the measures taken in other policy areas that affected civil rights during the Howard era. For example, the period after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 'created a phenomenal period for examining people's commitment to democratic norms'.<sup>209</sup> The introduction of the *Australian Security Organisation Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2003* allowed the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) new powers and altered Australia's established approach to *habeas corpus* (freedom from detention unless charged).<sup>210</sup> Many commentators highlight the loss of individual freedoms with the extension of government powers of surveillance and detention under anti-terrorism police powers, while others highlight the relatively high levels of political trust and confidence Australians have in government actions in such matters.<sup>211</sup>

### 4.3 Health

In modern Australian elections, health (along with education) is always one of the most important policy issues for Australians.<sup>212</sup> This policy area exposes the ideological differences in approach between the Liberal and Labor parties with Liberal preferencing private medical insurance and less government involvement in health, and Labor traditionally focusing on equity and access to services.<sup>213</sup> The Hawke government introduced Medicare, a universal healthcare system in 1984, and the Howard government continued support it. By 1999, the proportion of the Australian population covered by private health insurance had declined from approximately two-thirds to less than one-third.<sup>214</sup> To reverse this trend, a series of policies were introduced by the Howard government with the aim of reducing the burden on the public hospital system and of increasing the

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<sup>209</sup> D. Davis and B. Silver, 'Civil Liberties vs. Security: Public Opinion in the Context of the Terrorist Attacks on America', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2004, pp. 28–46.

<sup>210</sup> For details of these changes, see J. Hocking, *Terror Laws: ASIO, Counter-terrorism and the Threat to Democracy*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2004.

<sup>211</sup> D. Denemark, 'Trust, Efficacy and Opposition to Anti-terrorism Police Power: Australia in Comparative Perspective', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2012, pp. 91–113.

<sup>212</sup> Morgan Gallup Polls, Various Years, Roy Morgan Research, Finding 3745, <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/polls.cfm>, (Accessed 18 November 2013).

<sup>213</sup> For an overview of Australia's health policy positions, see J.S. Deeble, 'Medicare's Maturity: Shaping the Future from the Past', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 173, no. 1, 2000, pp. 44–47; J.A. Gillespie, *The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics, 1910–1960*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991; G. Gray, *The Politics of Medicare*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2004.

<sup>214</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's Health 2006*, Canberra, AIHW, 2006.

choices available within the healthcare system.<sup>215</sup> The Howard government's reforms promoted choice through expanding the private health sector with the introduction of a 30% rebate in 1999 (a measure that cost the federal government several billions of dollars per year), and by allowing private health funds to charge new members an additional 2% in premiums for each year past the age of 30 that the person was not insured.<sup>216</sup>

In addition to the private-health-insurance initiatives, a range of other health policies were introduced during the late 1990s with a focus on rural health services, the creation of a National Illicit Drug Strategy, and an increase in funding for health and medical research as a result of recommendations from the Wills Review. The increase in spending in the health portfolio by the Howard government was substantial: in the fiscal year 1996–1997, the Commonwealth Government spent approximately AUD\$20 billion, which increased to AUD\$48 billion in 2006–2007.<sup>217</sup>

#### 4.4 Agriculture

Over time, agricultural issues experience trends of decreased attention in policy focus. This occurs not only in Australia but in many countries included in policy analysis. Agricultural issues were not afforded a high priority under the Howard government despite the National Party (which is traditionally the party representing the interests of farmers and the agricultural sector) being its Coalition partner.<sup>218</sup> The Howard government's approach to regional policy differed little from that of the previous Labor government in its support for consensus between the states and federal governments for the devolution of responsibility to regional and local levels.<sup>219</sup> This is not a surprising approach given that issues (apart from trade and quarantine policy matters) relating to agricultural industries and communities are constitutionally the responsibility of state governments. While the direction of policy did not substantially alter under the Howard government, drought

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<sup>215</sup> For a more in-depth overview of private health in Australia, see A. Kay, 'Tense Layering and Synthetic Policy Paradigms: The Politics of Health Insurance in Australia', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2008, pp. 579–591.

<sup>216</sup> For a detailed account of the health policies that were introduced at this time, see Kay, pp. 579–591; A. Palangkaraya and J. Yong, 'Effects of Recent Carrot and Stick Policy Initiatives on Private Health Insurance Coverage in Australia', *The Economic Record*, vol. 81, no. 254, 2005, pp. 262–272.

<sup>217</sup> Treasury, Budget Overview 2006–07, May 2006.

<sup>218</sup> For an overview of Australia's agricultural policies, see L. Botterill, 'Rural Policy', in B. Galligan and W. Roberts (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2007; L. Botterill, 'Uncertain Climate: The Recent History of Drought Policy in Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2003, pp. 61–74; L. Botterill, 'Soap Operas, Cenotaphs and Sacred Cows: Countrymindedness and Rural Policy Debate in Australia', *Public Policy*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, pp. 23–36; G. Cockfield, 'The Vision Rational: Rural Policy in the 1990s', in A. Hede and S. Prasser (eds.), *Policy-making in Volatile Times*, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1995; W.D. Coleman and G. Skogstad, 'Neo-Liberalism, Policy Networks and Policy Change: Agricultural Policy Reform in Australia and Canada', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1995, pp. 242–263; G. Davison, 'Country Life: The Rise and Decline of an Australian Ideal', in G. Davison and M. Brodie (eds.), *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia*, Clayton, Monash University ePress, 2005.

<sup>219</sup> S. McGrath-Champ and G. Searle, 'Regional Policies over the Last Decade: Imprinting Working Nation', *Journal of Economic and Social Policy*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2005, p. 6.

assistance (exceptional circumstances) became more generous as the drought and its affects deepened across Australia.

Further deregulation of key sectors of the primary industries continued under the Howard government, but was measured by the provision of assistance particularly to smaller or ‘inefficient’ farmers who would not benefit from deregulation. The purpose of the assistance was to provide resources for farmers who chose to leave the sector, but also to assist in adapting to the new regulatory environment. For example, the support package for the dairy industry, available from July 2000 totalled AUS\$1.8 billion, and was funded by a levy on retail sales.<sup>220</sup> The sugar industry also received assistance with the introduction of the Sugar Industry Reform Program, which was partly introduced to compensate the sugar industry being omitted from the Australia – United States Free Trade Agreement in 2004.<sup>221</sup>

#### **4.5 Labour, Employment and Immigration**

This policy-topic code contains two of the most contentious policy issues of the legacy of the Howard government. The first is workplace relations and the second is policy on asylum seekers and refugees. As such, this section focuses on these two issues beginning with a discussion of workplace-relations policy.

Deregulation of the labour market was an important part of the Howard agenda when it came to office in 1996. It is not possible here to discuss all of the changes in this area during the Howard government, as such, only two major legislative reforms will be discussed in this section: the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* and WorkChoices in 2005. When Howard left office in 2007, unemployment was at a 33-year low, which, according to Howard, was largely attributable to strong economic growth. Specific changes to labour-market policy, the introduction of Work for the Dole, coupled with broader preference for work over welfare, were also important. Howard explains the goals of the changes to the workplace-relations system in 1996 and 2005, as well as specific measures introduced to the building and construction industry and special legislation to deal with independent contractors as follows:

removing monopoly union power and lifting economic productivity, so as to boost employment and real wages ... and the removal of unnecessary third-party intervention from the conduct of industrial relations, be it from the government, the commission or indeed anywhere else.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> M. Grattan and L. Tingle, ‘Costello’s Cash Cow Budget’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 May 2001.

<sup>221</sup> Productivity Commission, *Trade and Assistance Review 2003–04*, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, 2004.

<sup>222</sup> J. Howard, *Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Autobiography*, Sydney, HarperCollins Publishers, 2010, p. 566.

The industrial-relations policy reforms of the Howard government began with the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* and the establishment of Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs). This legislation gave workers the capacity to negotiate their individual employment contract directly with their employer. The employee's pay and benefits under the contract had to be no less in value than what they would have received under the appropriate award (i.e. the no-disadvantage test).

The second and most controversial employee relations reform came late in the Howard government's time in office in the form of WorkChoices.<sup>223</sup> After the 2004 election and gaining a majority in the Senate, the Howard government implemented additional changes to industrial relations. These changes included an exemption for businesses with fewer than 100 employees from the unfair-dismissal provisions in the legislation and the abolition of the no-disadvantage test in the establishment of collective agreements.<sup>224</sup> The primary aim of WorkChoices was to individualise employment relations, decreasing the role of trade unions and industrial tribunals. The legislation delivered greater flexibility in the employment conditions offered to employees. It reduced the role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in determining employment conditions and industrial disputes, and increased the difficulty for trade unions to enter workplaces and to organise industrial action. The legislation also reduced the exposure of employers to unfair-dismissal claims. The Bill passed at the end of 2005 and was followed by a long-running advertising campaign from the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

WorkChoices was widely criticised on the basis that many low-income earners and small-business employees were being hurt as a result of a loss of conditions including penalty rates and overtime, and a reduction in the remedial action available for unfair dismissal. There appears to be broad consensus that the WorkChoices legislation and the system it advocated was a major contributing factor to the Howard government losing office at the 2007 federal election.<sup>225</sup>

The second controversial element of this policy-topic area is immigration, and policy on refugees and asylum seekers. It may seem curious to see policy on immigration and refugees and asylum seekers coded with labour and employment; however, since the late 1980s, the key determinant of migration policy in Australia has been the labour-market outcomes of migration. As such, these two sub-topics being coded under the one major topic code is not inconsistent with practice. Immigration and refugee issues have been a policy area of great political interest and the

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<sup>223</sup> For further analysis of WorkChoices, see D. Woodward, 'WorkChoices and Howard's Defeat', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2010, pp. 274–288; R. Hall, 'Australian Industrial Relations in 2005—The WorkChoices Revolution', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2006, pp. 291–303; N. Balnave, *Employment Relations in Australia*, Brisbane, John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

<sup>224</sup> R. Garnaut, 2005.

<sup>225</sup> J. Brett, 'Exit Right: The Unravelling of John Howard', *Quarterly Essay*, no. 28, 2007, p. 124.

source of a great deal of the ill-will that is directed at the Howard government. Some of the most divisive images of Howard's government involve the 'politics of race', with this policy area occupying an important place in Howard's legacy in the minds of many. The following section begins with a discussion on Australia's immigration policy in broad terms to provide some context to the policy-making environment.

From the post – World War II era to the late 1960s, immigration was largely about nation building with the objective of population growth in the interests of national defence. This changed in the 1970s when the Whitlam government significantly reduced the immigration intake during its term in office. From this time on, Immigration and its relation to economics has been highly controversial in Australia.<sup>226</sup> In the 1980s, the Hawke government made a decision to expand the immigration intake, a decision driven by the rationale of creating the 'clever country', and the notion that through an injection of skilled entrepreneurial migrants, particularly from Asia, Australia would be better positioned to sell goods and services (rather than commodities) into the growing Asian region. John Menadue, Secretary for the Department of Immigration claimed that:

The achievements of countries like Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore are based upon the will and dynamism of their societies. They have grasped their limited opportunities and made the most of them. This is where immigration can play a role for us. A bold immigration program is the only tool readily at hand to challenge our complacency, smugness and parochialism. That is where we must look to future development of this country and effective use of its resources.<sup>227</sup>

Hawke once argued that the most important decision in Australia's first 100 years since European colonisation was to become a nation of mass immigration.<sup>228</sup> However, these arrangements unravelled with the recession in 1991, and there developed a focus on ensuring that migrants' skills could be used for work in Australia with a minimum contribution from the Australian taxpayer. With high levels of unemployment, migration became difficult to justify unless it could be shown to provide immediate benefits.

In 1988, while in opposition, Howard attacked the level of Asian immigration in Australia. By 1995, a reversal of this position had occurred, with Howard quoted on the front page of *The Australian* saying, 'I was wrong on Asians'.

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<sup>226</sup> For work on Australia's Immigration history, see J. Jupp, *Immigration*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1991; J. Jupp, 'Immigrant Settlement Policy in Australia', in J. Jupp and G. Freeman (eds.), *Nations of Immigrants: Australia, the United States and International Migration*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992; M. Klapdor, M. Coombs, and C. Bohm, *Australian Citizenship: A Chronology of Major Developments in Policy and Law*, Canberra, Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, 2009.

<sup>227</sup> J. Menadue, Secretary for the Department of Immigration, cited in R. Birrell and T. Birrell, *An Issue of People*, 2nd edn., Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1987, p. 287.

<sup>228</sup> Cited in Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 188.

Immigration was increasingly seen for its role in supplementing the existing labour force. At the beginning of the Howard government, the annual intake of immigrants fell from 99,000 in 1995–1996 to 92,000 in 1999–2000, 89,000 in 2001–2002, and 94,000 in 2002–2003. However, it began to rise again in 2003–2004 to 111,000 and 123,400 in 2004–2005, an increase that was driven by Australia's skills shortage in the labour market.<sup>229</sup> The immigration through the family reunion programme during this period decreased, accompanied by measures denying migrants access to welfare benefits during their first two years in Australia.<sup>230</sup>

The highly controversial Tampa affair created an enduring and divisive episode in the Howard government's approach to asylum seekers. The Tampa affair refers to the incident in which 430 asylum seekers who were boarded on the Norwegian ship Tampa were denied permission to land in Australian territory. Howard stated, 'We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come'. Immigration emerged as a key election issue in 2001.

These moments have become strongly ingrained in Australians' collective memory about Howard and immigration and refugee issues. While there has been a great deal of debate about the approach adopted by the Howard government, it is interesting to note that an Australian Electoral Study taken shortly after the 2001 election and the Tampa incident found that approximately two-thirds of voters supported the Howard government's approach.<sup>231</sup> Howard's 2002 budget saw increased expenditure on border security, compensation to Nauru and Papua New Guinea to host processing centres for asylum seekers arriving by to Australia by boat, and the construction of a processing centre on Christmas Island. There was also increased funding for contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to deter transit countries sending people to Australia, with the aim of slowing down unauthorised arrivals by sea. In 2007, the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* that introduced citizenship testing and the *Border Security Act* were successfully introduced through Parliament.

Kelly argues that the only difference in approach between Hawke, Keating and Howard on the topic of unauthorised arrivals is that Howard confronted 'many more boat people'.<sup>232</sup> He cites Whitlam's position on refugees from Vietnam when he stated the following: 'I'm not having

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<sup>229</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, cited in C. Lewis, 'The Howard Government: The Extent to which Public Attitudes Influenced Australia's Federal Policy Mix', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2007, p. 90.

<sup>230</sup> For further details on this policy, see M. Millet, 'Migration Cuts May Trigger Poll', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 1997.

<sup>231</sup> For a more detailed account, see M. Goot, 'Despite Alarm Bells and Whistles, the Tide is Turning on Immigration', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 August 2002.

<sup>232</sup> Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 190.

hundreds of fucking Vietnamese Balts coming into this country with their political and religious hatreds'<sup>233</sup> as evidence of a harder line than that of the Hawke, Keating or Howard governments.

#### 4.6 Education and Culture

Many of the reforms of the Howard government in the education sector were not popular, particularly in relation to increases to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), despite Commonwealth spending on education increasing from AUD\$10.8 billion in 1996–1997 to AUD\$16.6 billion in 2006–2007.<sup>234</sup>

Primary-school and secondary-school education dominate this policy area, which may be surprising given that they are the constitutional responsibility of the states. However, the Commonwealth began funding school education in 1963, and from that time, the education policy-making dynamic changed in Australia.<sup>235</sup> For most of the period from 1968 to 2003, the federal government exerted influence through funding curriculum projects, but the federal government did not dominate the states and their autonomy.<sup>236</sup> Many education experts believe 2003 was a time when the federal government exerted greater influence on education through funding to the states and territories, connecting funding with the implementation of changes, particularly in the area of curriculum.<sup>237</sup> This period is certainly consistent with the increased level of the proportion of attention to this policy area that emerged in the analysis of the data.

Education commentators note that at any time, education policy and practice takes a position somewhere on the continuum of purposes from public to private. Reid notes the strong emphasis on the democratic purposes of education, and the massification of secondary education as a preparation for productive participation in society in the Whitlam era.<sup>238</sup> He argues that under the Howard government, education policy shifted to the other end of the continuum, away from the themes of public and democracy to an emphasis on the private purpose of education.<sup>239</sup>

Two of the largest increases in attention in this policy area came in 1999 and in 2007. The 1999 budget placed an emphasis on literacy and numeracy funding, as well as changes to the funding arrangements of non-government schools. The 2007 budget established the Higher Education Endowment Fund (HEEF) from the Future Fund. The aim was to generate earnings for capital works and research facilities for higher education institutions, establish three new technical

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>234</sup> Treasury, *Budget Overview 2006–07*. May, 2006, p. 23.

<sup>235</sup> K. Piper, *Riders in the Chariot: Curriculum Reform and the National Interest, 1965–1995*, Melbourne, ACER, 1997.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> A. Reid, 'Is this a Revolution? A Critical Analysis of the Rudd Government's National Education Agenda', *Curriculum Perspectives*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2009, pp. 1–13.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

colleges, provide additional funding for apprenticeships, and create a focus on literacy and numeracy programmes in primary schools, as well as a voucher system for parents of children who require additional educational support.

In addition to the policy activities in this area, it is important to mention one of the enduring debates about the legacy of the Howard government, the ‘loud, long, and often bitter’<sup>240</sup> ‘history wars’.<sup>241</sup> The term ‘history wars’ is a difficult concept to define, but the most controversial and heated aspect of the wide-ranging debate centres on the nature of European settlement in Australia, and the position it should occupy in Australia’s national identity. The debates see a particular view of Australian history advanced by authors such as Reynolds,<sup>242</sup> who highlights the deaths of large numbers of Aboriginal people, bloodshed and massacres that was inflicted by European settlement. Conversely, other historians such as Windschuttle<sup>243</sup> and Blainey prefer a version of European settlement that emphasises a triumphant pioneering spirit, arguing that some of the claims about the violence of Australia’s settlement are exaggerated. The school history curriculum was important in this debate, as a result of a History Summit in 2006. Howard argued that much of the curriculum taught in schools promoted a ‘black armband’<sup>244</sup> view of Australia’s settlement, focusing on the violent dispossession of indigenous Australians by European arrival and settlement. Howard stated:

This ‘black armband’ view of our past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. I take a very different view. I believe that the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed.<sup>245</sup>

While admitting that there were detrimental and long-running effects of European settlement, Howard argued that this should not diminish the pride Australians should feel in all that has been achieved since settlement.

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<sup>240</sup> A. Bonnell and M. Crotty, ‘Australia’s History under Howard, 1996–2007’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 617, 2008, p. 163.

<sup>241</sup> For a detailed account of the history wars, see A. Clark and S. Macintyre, *The History Wars*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2004; Bonnell and Crotty, pp. 149–165.

<sup>242</sup> Henry Reynolds’ work includes H. Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, Ringwood, Penguin Books, 1982; H. Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain?: The Question of Genocide in Australia’s History*, Ringwood, Penguin, 2001; H. Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, Sydney, New South Publishing, 2013.

<sup>243</sup> See K. Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Paddington, Macleay Press, 2002.

<sup>244</sup> This term was first used by historian G. Blainey, ‘Drawing Up a Balance Sheet of Our History’, *Quadrant*, vol. 37, no. 7–8, 1993, pp. 10–15.

<sup>245</sup> J. Howard, ‘The Liberal Tradition: The Beliefs and Values which Guide the Federal Government’, Sir Robert Menzies Lecture, 18 November 1996, <http://web.archive.org/web/19970212063226/http://www.nla.gov.au/pmc/pressrel/menzies.html>, (accessed July 19, 2011).



## 4.7 Environment

This policy-topic code provides an example of one of the criticisms of the PAP coding method, as the allocation of topic codes in this area is less straightforward than in other areas.<sup>246</sup> For most policy issues, the decision to allocate a major topic code is straightforward but environment sees a greater overlap with other possible codes, for example, the carbon tax. Some coders may code policy issues related to the introduction of a carbon tax under macroeconomic policy, as it is a form of taxation, others may determine that it is an energy initiative and should be coded in that policy area, while others would argue that a carbon tax is conceived as a climate-change reform, and so should be coded as an environment issue. Coding one policy issue under several codes would affect the effectiveness of the analysis, which means it is important to determine one major code for each issue. This demonstrates the importance of reliability tests when undertaking this kind of analysis.

It is important to acknowledge here that much of the constitutional, policy and management responsibility in environmental policy does not lie with the federal government. However, part of what is interesting about this policy area is the increasing expectation that the Commonwealth Government should involve itself in environmental issues.<sup>247</sup>

Howard is strongly remembered in this policy area as the Prime Minister who refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, one of only two leaders of developed countries not to, the United States being the other. Howard did not retreat from his belief that doing so would ‘cost jobs—it will cost the jobs of unionists and non-unionists alike—and it will do very great damage to the resource sector of Australia, which is not in the national interests of this country’.<sup>248</sup> In his autobiography, Howard described the Kyoto agreement as ‘eurocentric’,<sup>249</sup> justifying his government’s refusal to sign ‘unless and until the major polluters were subject to its conditions’.<sup>250</sup> Howard described his position as follows: ‘I accept that climate change is a challenge, I accept the broad theory about global warming. I am sceptical about a lot of the more gloomy predictions’.<sup>251</sup>

While Howard’s refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol is the legacy that most remember, the Howard government did introduce a range of measures in this policy area. As opposition leader in 1996, Howard committed to establishing an AUD\$1billion Natural Heritage Trust from the proceeds of the partial sale of Telstra to focus on water and vegetation management, particularly

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<sup>246</sup> For a detailed account of this issue, see S. Dovers, ‘The Australian Environmental Policy Agenda’, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2013, pp. 114–128.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> J. Howard, *Australia Hansard*, 26 May 2004.

<sup>249</sup> Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 523.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 549.

<sup>251</sup> Howard in an interview with Four Corners, ABC TV, 28 August 2006.

salinity issues. This initiative received wide support from environmental groups, including the Australian Conservation Foundation, and was implemented after the Howard government was elected.

A key piece of environmental legislation introduced by the Howard government in 1999 was the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This is a fundamental piece of legislation in the Australian environmental regulatory framework and has been used to limit or stop activities such as the construction of dams, whaling activity and farming activities (e.g. sugarcane farming), as individuals or groups can nominate plant or animal species for protection under the act.<sup>252</sup> It is important to acknowledge that this Act was enacted to secure the support of the Australian Democrats,<sup>253</sup> who held the balance of power in the Senate, to enable the passage of the legislation required for the introduction of the GST.

As mentioned earlier, much of Howard's Prime Ministership coincided with a major drought experienced across much of Australia, with water allocation for production, environmental water requirements and urban water restrictions dominating policy debates culminating in the National Water Initiative of 2004–2014 and the *Commonwealth Water Act 2007*. Other significant actions in the environment policy area include the introduction of legislation to ban widespread tree clearing in western Queensland and fishing in the Great Barrier Reef.

In 2007, the Howard government introduced a range of measures important to environment policy. These include the National Heritage Trust extension, climate-change initiatives, including increased research funding to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the launch of the Environment Stewardship Programme to partner with landowners to protect environmental assets on private land as well as funding for the provision of water tanks in schools and community organisations and solar hot water rebates for households. In 2007, Howard also introduced the National Plan for Water Security, an AUD\$10 billion investment over 10 years in water management in the Murray–Darling Basin, the Great Artesian Basin and Northern Australia, which was designed to increase the level of environmental flows in the Murray–Darling River system.

While growth in attention is visible in this policy area, much of the policy work was at the state level, particularly in the areas of land and water use, urban and regional planning and waste management. However, intergovernmental approaches and relationships were fundamental to

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<sup>252</sup> J. Marohasy, 'John Howard, Environmentalist', *Institute of Public Affairs*, December 2007, p. 33.

<sup>253</sup> The Australian Democrats were a small centre-left party who held, outright or shared with other minor parties, the balance of power in the Senate from 1981 to 2005. See A. Gauja, 'Evaluating the Success and Contribution of a Minor Party: The Case of the Australian Democrats', *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2010, pp. 486–503.

successful policy outcomes in this area.<sup>254</sup> Interstate conflict over water management in the Murray–Darling Basin is one of the most high profile and enduring examples. However, there was federal-government action and intervention in this policy area. In the early 1980s, there was federal intervention in Tasmania by denying permission for the Franklin River to be dammed.

While the environment was not a major policy focus for the Howard government in its first three terms, the final term saw unprecedented increase in the money spent in rural and regional Australia on environmental projects.<sup>255</sup> The Howard government increased spending in this policy area from AUD\$1.69 billion in 2001–2002 (0.2% of GDP) to AUD\$4.3 billion in 2007–2008 (approximately 0.4% of GDP).<sup>256</sup>

#### 4.8 Energy

Australia is a major energy exporter, exporting two-thirds of the energy it produces.<sup>257</sup> It is the world's largest exporter of coal, a position it has held since 1986.<sup>258</sup> In 2006–2007, 23.4% of Australian exports by value were energy exports.<sup>259</sup> Australia's primary energy use comes from coal. In 2005–2006, coal constituted 41% of primary energy consumption, followed by oil and gas, with only 5% from renewable sources.<sup>260</sup>

The issue of nuclear power within the energy policy area holds an enduring place of controversy in Australia. Nuclear power was the focus of a deeply divisive debate in Australia during the 1970s, with questions about whether Australia should mine and export its reserves of uranium. Since that time, debates have continued, with a deeply held opposition to exploiting nuclear power in the electorate. The Howard government was the most positive in considering the possibility of expanding Australia's nuclear-energy position, commissioning a Prime Ministerial Taskforce to review the prospect. However, as public support dissipated, the Howard government moved away from the issue. Rudd tapped into the mood of the electorate, campaigning in the 2007 election that the development of nuclear power would not occur under a government led by him.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> For a detailed discussion of these issues, see Steward & Hendricks, 2008, p. 206.

<sup>255</sup> For a detailed account, see L. Botterill, 'Rural Policy Issues', p. 152.

<sup>256</sup> Cited in C. Lewis, 'Howard's Government—Post Mortem', *On Line Opinion*, 2008, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/print.asp?article=7664>, (accessed 28 July 2008).

<sup>257</sup> Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, *Energy Update*, 2007, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 2007.

<sup>258</sup> Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, *Energy in Australia*, 2008, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 2008b.

<sup>259</sup> Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics, *Australian Commodities: June Quarter 2008*, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 2008a.

<sup>260</sup> Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, *Energy Update*, 2007.

<sup>261</sup> C. Evans, 'Securing a Sustainable Energy Supply for Australia's Future', Australian Labor Party Policy, 2007, [http://www.alp.org.au/policy/index.php#resources\\_&\\_energy](http://www.alp.org.au/policy/index.php#resources_&_energy), (accessed 3 July 2008).

Howard saw nuclear power as a mechanism assist against global warming, considering it a clean energy source and extremely safe. He also considered it important that Australia possessed almost 40% of the world's readily exploitable uranium reserves.<sup>262</sup> Howard argued the following: 'a nation like Australia, with all our uranium reserves and given our power needs and the fact that they will double between now and 2050, we would be crazy in the extreme if we did not allow for the development of nuclear power'.<sup>263</sup> He went further, describing as 'hypocritical' an Australian government's position of allowing sales of Australian uranium to other countries but concluding that the nuclear industry is not safe for Australia.<sup>264</sup>

#### **4.9 Transportation**

The Howard government's focus on transportation was driven by the need for transport infrastructure to assist in the delivery of productivity efficiencies in the economy.<sup>265</sup> However, it is important to note that much of the responsibility for the transport infrastructure lies with state governments, with the Commonwealth Government being responsible for the economic regulation of infrastructure through the provisions of the *Trade Practices Act*.<sup>266</sup>

The major emphasis in this policy issue for the Howard government came late in its term in office, with 2004, 2006 and 2007 seeing increased funding for the land infrastructure programme, Auslink. The government allocated AUD\$1.3 billion to upgrade Australia's road and rail systems. It maintained the Roads Recovery Program that it initiated in 2000, which provided funding directly to local councils to upgrade roads in local communities. This programme received a significant funding increase in 2006 of AUD\$307.5 million. The Auslink 2 initiative was introduced in 2007, with the plan to increase the government's investment in road and rail infrastructure through an AUD\$22.3 billion committed over five years.

#### **4.10 Law, Crime and Family Issues**

This policy area falls predominately within the jurisdiction of state governments in Australia and as such, typically does not receive a high proportion of attention in the federal political agenda. However, a reform that Howard lists as one of which he is intensely proud was the national gun-control laws introduced shortly after coming to office in 1996.<sup>267</sup> Keating agreed, stating that 'the

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<sup>262</sup> Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 552.

<sup>263</sup> L. Allan, 'PM Wants Nuclear Power in His Own Backyard', *Australian Associated Press*, 29 December 2006.

<sup>264</sup> Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 553.

<sup>265</sup> P. Costello, Budget Speech, 2006.

<sup>266</sup> For a discussion, see L. McInerney, C. Nadarajah, and F. Perkins, 'Australia's Infrastructure Policy and the COAG National Reform Agenda', *Economic Round-Up*, Summer 2007, pp. 17–49.

<sup>267</sup> Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 253.

best thing Howard did was guns'.<sup>268</sup> The laws were in response to a man killing 35 people in an attack at Port Arthur in Tasmania.<sup>269</sup> Howard had called for tougher gun laws in Australia one year earlier in one of his Headland speeches. While the use of firearms was an area of responsibility for the states, he wanted to limit the availability of firearms to avoid the United States' experience, and the high murder rate in that country, arguing that 'it would be a cardinal tragedy if Australia did not learn the bitter lesson of the United States regarding guns'.<sup>270</sup>

Support for stricter gun laws was weaker in some rural areas of Australia where many farmers need such weapons to conduct their daily work activities. Gaining the support of this section of his constituency was a challenge for his relationship with his Coalition partner, the National Party.

#### 4.11 Social Welfare

Many people would not anticipate that social-welfare policy would be an issue of focus for a Howard-led government. However, this policy area saw many reforms, including the introduction of the Family Tax Benefit, maternity allowance and the baby bonus, as well as increased carer allowances and respite services. The baby bonus was a lump-sum payment of AUD\$3000 to parents, receivable after the birth of each child. The Family Tax Benefit introduced in 2003–2004 became the second largest area of social-security spending after the AUD\$20.1 billion for the aged pension.<sup>271</sup> The largest single item of Australia's federal-government expenditure is social welfare—approximately 41% in 2007, with the majority of recipients being middle-income households that receive family payments.<sup>272</sup> During 2004, the incomes of the poorest 20% of families increased by 18.5% from 1997, compared with 17.5% for the typical middle-income family.<sup>273</sup>

In addition to the measures discussed above, there were changes under the Welfare to Work policy. These changes meant that sole parents with a youngest child over eight years of age must accept job offers and work a minimum of 15 hours per week to continue receiving the Newstart Allowance. This was intended to encourage single parents and disability pensioners to re-enter the

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<sup>268</sup> Cited in Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 291.

<sup>269</sup> For detailed accounts of the gun laws, see J. Crook, *Port Arthur—Gun Tragedy, Gun Law Miracle*, Melbourne, Gun Control Australia, 1999; 'Uniform National Gun Law (Australia)', *Commonwealth Law Bulletin*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1988, p. 443; S. Chapman, *Over Our Dead Bodies: Port Arthur and Australia's Fight for Gun Control*, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 2013; B. Laming, 'The 1996 Port Arthur Massacre: Implications for Current and Future Cooperative Federalism', *Social Alternatives*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2007, pp. 50–55.

<sup>270</sup> J. Howard, Menzies Research Centre, 6 June 1995.

<sup>271</sup> P. Saunders, 'The \$85 Billion Tax/Welfare Churn', *Issue Analysis*, no. 57, April 2005, p. 5.

<sup>272</sup> A. Garnett, and P. Lewis, 'The Economy', in C. Aulich, and R. Wettenthal (eds.), *Howard's Fourth Government*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2008, p. 142.

<sup>273</sup> National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, cited in M. Wade, 'Handouts Make Welfare Work for Howard', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 November 2004.

workforce.<sup>274</sup> In 2001, the Work for the Dole policy was introduced, with the aim of ensuring that unemployed people receiving a welfare benefit contribute to the community through work. This was the first part of the Howard government's policy of Mutual Obligation, which was described by Howard (2002) as 'the modern Australian way, to do something for the society in return for government assistance'.<sup>275</sup>

While the Howard government pursued policies that were tougher than those under Labor in that they required recipients to demonstrate efforts in finding employment or undertaking training to become more able to find work, Howard maintained a social-security system that protected society's most vulnerable. The promotion of Mutual Obligation for social-security recipients to provide contributions to the community in exchange for the benefits received was very popular with the public, with high levels of approval demonstrated in the opinion polls.<sup>276</sup> During the tenure of the Howard government, the proportion of Australians remaining unemployed for 12 months or more was reduced from 36.7 to 17.8% between 1993 and 2006, while the average reduction for countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) during this period was from 35 to 32.2%.<sup>277</sup>

Megalogenis argues that politicians reveal their 'true selves when they hand out money, because the transaction compels them to choose between voters'.<sup>278</sup> This shift to 'middle class welfare' is an issue that has become one of the hallmarks of the Howard era. Megalogenis also makes the important point that 'more than one in three households ends up paying no tax once their family payments and tax breaks are counted. The proportion of voters in this category did not shift under the Howard government. It was 38 per cent of all households at the end of Paul Keating's government in 1996 and was at 38 per cent ten years later'.<sup>279</sup>

While many characterise the Howard government as neo-liberal, the Australian welfare state grew under the Howard government, a fact that is not altogether consistent with a neo-liberal approach.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> For a detailed discussion of these measures, see Garnett and Lewis, p. 138.

<sup>275</sup> J. Howard, Address to the New South Wales Liberal State Convention, 24 March 2002.

<sup>276</sup> C. Lewis, 'The Howard Government: The Extent to which Public Attitudes Influenced Australia's Federal Policy Mix', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2007, p. 90.

<sup>277</sup> Lewis, 'Howard's Government'.

<sup>278</sup> Megalogenis, p. 84.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>280</sup> A. Fenna and A. Tapper, 'The Australian Welfare State and the Neoliberalism Thesis', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2012, pp. 155–172. See also L. Bryson and F. Verity, 'Australia: From Wage-earners to Neo-Liberal Welfare State', in P. Alcock and G. Craig (eds.), *International Social Policy: Welfare Regimes in the Developed World*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; A. Harding, R. Lloyd, and N. Warren, *The Distribution of Taxes and Government Benefits in Australia*, Canberra, National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, 2004; A. Jamrozik, *Social Policy in the Post-welfare State: Australian Society in a Changing World*, 3rd edn., Frenchs Forest, Longman, 2009; K. Laurie and J. McDonald, 'A Perspective on Trends in Australian Government Spending', *Economic*

#### 4.12 Community Development, Planning and Housing Issues

This policy area did not receive sustained policy initiatives under the Howard government. The largest reform during the Howard government in this area was the introduction of the *Housing Assistance Act 1996*. The object of this Act was to assist access to affordable and appropriate housing.<sup>281</sup> There were also some defence housing and housing-loan initiatives in 2006, but this policy area was not a high priority on the Howard government's policy agenda.

#### 4.13 Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce

The notion that the Howard government adopted policies that favoured business groups is persistent in the literature.<sup>282</sup> Certainly, the Howard government lowered company tax rates, as did the Hawke and Keating governments, reducing the company tax rate from 36 to 30%. The delivery of continuous budget surpluses over the life of the Howard government not only reduced government debt but also provided, through the privatisation of public assets and government services, an opportunity for the private sector.<sup>283</sup> However, the notion that these policies were implemented primarily in the interest of the business community does not provide a reasoned understanding of the introduction of this significant reform.

There were three key moments of reform in this area in 1998, 2001 and 2007 under the Howard government. In 1998, there was a reorientation of the financial regulatory environment towards one with new prudential and disclosure regulators. This came as a result of the implementation of the Wallis Committee of Inquiry recommendation for the establishment of the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA) as the single regulator to oversee the prudential regulation of banks, building societies, credit unions and all other financial institutions.<sup>284</sup> This was

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*Roundup*, no. 1, Canberra, Department of the Treasury, 2009; P. Mendes, 'Retrenching or Renovating the Australian Welfare State: The Paradox of the Howard Government's Neo-Liberalism', *International Journal of Social Welfare*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2009, pp. 102–110; P. Smyth, 'Australian Social Policy in an International Context', in A. McClelland and P. Smyth (eds.), *Social Policy in Australia: Understanding for Action*, South Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>281</sup> For details on the Act, see <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/publications-articles/housing/housing-assistance-act-1996-annual-reports>.

<sup>282</sup> For example, E. Jones, 'The Ascendancy of Idealist Economics in Australia', pp. 44–71; P. Mendes, 'Australian Neoliberal Think Tanks and the Backlash against the Welfare State', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, vol. 51, 2003, pp. 29–56.

<sup>283</sup> C. Lewis, 'The Howard Government', p. 84.

<sup>284</sup> Detailed accounts of the reforms can be seen in D. Harding, 'Wallis Report Offers Blue Print for Competition', *International Financial Law Review*, vol. 16, 1997, pp. 17–20; I. Haper, 'The Wallis Report: An Overview', *Banking and Finance Law Review*, vol. 13, 1998, pp. 449–471; M.K. Lewis, 'The Wallis Inquiry: Its Place in the Evolution of the Australian Financial System', *Accounting Forum*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1997, pp. 229–253; J.O.N. Perkins, *The Wallis Report and the Australian Financial System*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1998.

an important review because its objective was to consider whether (and if so, how) the financial regulatory arrangements should be reorganised to address future challenges.<sup>285</sup>

In 2001, the *Financial Services Reform Act* was introduced. This also resulted from the recommendations of the 1997 Wallis Review. The Act provided uniform regulation of all financial products, service providers and markets, a single licensing framework to replace various legal regimes, and minimum standards of conduct and disclosure for financial service providers. The *Corporations Act* was also introduced in 2001, and is the principal legislation regulating companies in Australia. It regulates matters such as the formation and operation of companies, duties of officers, takeovers and fundraising.

#### 4.14 Defence

Australia's defence policy has undergone significant changes over time. It has shifted from an era where primary importance was attached to Australia's relationship with the United Kingdom to strengthening ties with the United States. It has also developed a range of partnerships with its neighbours, as well as a more self-reliant defence force.<sup>286</sup> The Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities or the Dibb Review, conducted in 1986, facilitated much of the shift towards self-reliance in the Australian Defence Forces. There was a prolonged period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s of 'zero-growth' for the defence budget, and the acquisition of new technologies meant decreased numbers of personnel for the Army, and decreased funding for operating costs.

When the Howard government was elected it stipulated that it would afford defence a higher priority. *Australia's Strategic Policy*, published in 1997, was the first major defence policy statement of the newly elected Howard government. It directly addressed uncertainties that would arise in Indonesia through an inevitable change in leadership in that country, and focused on the risks posed by issues experienced by Australia's small neighbours. However, its principal consideration consisted of the challenges presented by the rise of China.<sup>287</sup> The other significant shifts in policy came with the abandonment of the concept that Australia's primary strategic interests were in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, that Australia's interests were directly engaged throughout the broader Asia-Pacific region, and how the region could support Australia's global interests.

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<sup>285</sup> C. Bakir, 'Who Needs a Review of the Financial System in Australia? The Case of the Wallis Inquiry', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2010, p. 512.

<sup>286</sup> For detailed accounts of the history of Australia's defence policy, see I.M. Cumpston, *Australia's Defence Policy 1901–2000*, Deakin, 2001; R. Huiskens and M. Thatcher (eds.), 'History as Policy', *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence*, no. 167, Australian National University, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 2007.

<sup>287</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 1997, pp. 12–14, <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/sr97/SR97.pdf>, (accessed 8 November 2011).



Howard asserted that expenditure on defence ‘had been woefully neglected by the Keating Government’.<sup>288</sup> While the Howard government was reducing the level of deficit and debt in the federal budget, defence was quarantined from budget cuts. Under the Howard government, defence expenditure rose by 47% in real terms. From the first Howard government, there was a level of support for higher defence spending and the global terrorism challenge reinforced Howard’s view that it was important to invest more in the defence budget. After years of zero real increases in the defence budget, the Howard government’s 2000 Defence White Paper outlined a plan to lift spending by AUD\$32 billion. The Howard government’s effect is reflected in the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy’s comments: ‘Over my thirty-four years in the Army we have never enjoyed such a high degree of respect and support from the government. Nor have we been accorded such a relatively high priority within the overall scheme of Commonwealth resources as we are today’.<sup>289</sup>

There is a visible increase in attention paid to defence matters from 1999 on, with Australian defence forces active in East Timor, the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan and Iraq during the Howard government’s time in office. In 1999, Australia became involved in a United Nations military peace-keeping mission in East Timor, with Australia deploying 6,000 troops followed four years later with the provision of 2000 military personnel for the US-led invasion of Iraq and an ongoing troop presence.

#### **4.15 Space, Science, Technology and Communication**

This policy area did not receive high levels of sustained attention from the Howard government. Much of the activity in this policy area during Howard’s terms centres on the government’s staged divestment of its ownership of Telstra. The sale was executed over a period, with the first third of the telecommunications shares floated on the stock exchange. A further 16.6% of the government shares of Telstra were sold, reducing government ownership to 50.1%.<sup>290</sup> After the Coalition achieved a majority in the Senate in 2004, the Parliament approved the final sale of the government’s share in Telstra, creating a nexus between partial Telstra privatisation and the protection of the environment through its policy that the sale proceeds would contribute to establishing a \$1 billion Heritage Trust.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 234.

<sup>289</sup> Speech to the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, 23 March 2005, cited in Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 445.

<sup>290</sup> C. Aulich and J. O’Flynn, ‘John Howard: The Great Privatiser?’, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2007, p. 372.

<sup>291</sup> Kelly, *The March of the Patriots*, p. 235.

## 4.16 Foreign Trade

The Howard government continued with reforms and initiatives of the Hawke and Keating governments in its approach to this policy area. However, some commentators note the Howard government's preference for bilateralism in this to differentiate itself from the Labor government's approach.<sup>292</sup> The Hawke and Keating governments actively promoted a multilateral trade policy for Australia through forums such as Australia's leadership of the Cairns Group of Agricultural Fair Traders.<sup>293</sup> Capling notes that during Howard's time in office, the 'world ... changed dramatically ... the world ... turned away from multilateralism'.<sup>294</sup> In 2008, Capling described the trade agenda pursued by the Howard-led government as three-pronged: multilateral and bilateral, and constituting open regionalism and the pursuit of preferential trade agreements (PTAs).<sup>295</sup> She argues that the final prong: PTAs was the most important aspect of the Howard government's agenda, attributing this focus to a combination of defensive, political and strategic reasons.

The Howard government promoted free trade as a central platform of growth, and as being fundamental to the national interest, although it was mindful of the voters' fears in this sense. Howard stated that the government 'was conscious of the pain some parts of the community were bearing as a result of globalization and more open and competitive markets, and would continue to be sympathetic to sectors in need of help to adjust'.<sup>296</sup> The realisation that there were difficulties with the pace of change was further evidenced in the Howard government's decision to slow the pace of tariff reductions in some manufacturing industries,<sup>297</sup> despite the previous government's commitment in the 1994 Bogor Declaration for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member nations to achieve 'free and open trade and investment' by 2010.<sup>298</sup>

Nearing the end of the Howard government's final term, Australia's largest trading partners were Japan (17%), the European Union (14%), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (12%), China (11%), the United States of America (8%), South Korea (7%) and New

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<sup>292</sup> For a discussion of this change in approach, see T. Krever, 'The US–Australia Free Trade Agreement: The Interface between Partisan Politics and National Objectives', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2006, pp. 51–69.

<sup>293</sup> See D. Kenyon and D. Lee, 'The Struggle for Trade Liberalisation in Agriculture: Australia and the Cairns Group in the Uruguay Round', *Australia in the World, The Foreign Affairs and Trade Files*, no. 4, 2006.

<sup>294</sup> A. Capling, 'Australia's Trade Policy Dilemmas', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2008, p. 230.

<sup>295</sup> A. Capling, 'Australia's Trade Policy Dilemmas', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2008, p. 235.

<sup>296</sup> G. Baker, 'World Markets Must Stay Open', *Australian Financial Review*, 23 September 1998.

<sup>297</sup> For a detailed account of the tariff reductions and assistance packages, see Industries Assistance Commission, *Annual Report 1986–7, 1987*; Industries Assistance Commission, *Annual Report 1994–5, 1995*; Industry Commission, *The Automotive Industry*, 26 May 1997; P.J. Sheehan, N. Pappas, and E. Cheng, *The Rebirth of Australian Industry: Australian Trade in Elaborately Transformed Manufacturers 1979–1993*, Melbourne, Centre for Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University.

<sup>298</sup> Lewis, 'The Howard Government', p. 85.

Zealand (6%).<sup>299</sup> Commodities constituted the largest share of Australia's export market at the time, with the greatest in value being coal, iron ore, tourism, education, gold, crude petroleum, aluminium ore, aluminium, copper ores, natural gas, beef, and professional and business services.<sup>300</sup>

#### **4.17 International Affairs and Foreign Aid**

International Affairs generally has not commanded a high proportion of Australian governments' policy agenda. While many commentators argue that political contest and ideology are important to the manner in which Australian governments approach issues of international affairs few would contest the claim that Howard, and more broadly Australian international affairs policy, have been heavily influenced by exogenous factors and events. While the argument that external events constitute the only factor to effect policy change is not being made here, it is certainly surprising to find the Howard government, particularly in its last two terms, affording this policy area relative prominence considering Howard's reputation as a provincial, small-town solicitor.

The absence of Australian participation in significant military action in the early years of the Howard government is consistent with the low levels of attention generally paid to this policy area.<sup>301</sup> The first increase in attention under Howard was its decision to lead a peace-keeping operation to oversee the creation of an independent East Timor. However, the major policy punctuation in this area followed the 9/11 attacks. Howard was in the United States at the time of the attack in 2001, which many commentators argue was central to his government's decision to support the United States through its declaration to support military action against the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>302</sup> In a speech on border protection in October 2001, Howard spoke about the events of 9/11: 'of all of the events that I have been in any way touched by in the twenty-seven years that I've been in public life, none has had a more profound impact on me than has this'.<sup>303</sup> It is important to acknowledge that there is a great deal of criticism surrounding the Howard government's support of the United States' invasion of Iraq,<sup>304</sup> and more broadly, its support and

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<sup>299</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Trade Statement 2007', A Statement by Warren Truss, Minister for Trade.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Except the involvement in the first Gulf War and the 'peacekeeping' mission in East Timor.

<sup>302</sup> D. Debats, T. McDonald, and M. Williams, 'Mr Howard Goes to Washington', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2012, pp. 455–472; M. McDonald, 'Constructing Insecurity', *International Relations*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2005, pp. 297–320.

<sup>303</sup> Cited in M. Wesley, 'Perspectives on Australian Foreign Policy, 2001', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 56, 2002, p. 60.

<sup>304</sup> An example can be found in A. Broinowski, *Allied and Addicted*, Carlton North, Scribe Publications, 2007, where the author argues that Australia displays dependency sycophancy in its relationship with the US.

commitment to the relationship with the United States.<sup>305</sup> Some commentators make mocking observations such as if the United States invaded Mars, Australia would send a battalion along'.<sup>306</sup> The Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) alliance and Australia's relationship with the United States is one that has attracted a long-running debate about the degree of closeness to the United States that is beneficial to Australia's national interest.<sup>307</sup> While this debate is not a focus of this research, it is important to note that ANZUS alliance is a bipartisan policy, and what differs at times is the level of emphasis this relationship receives.<sup>308</sup>

In 2003, 88 Australians were killed in the Bali bombings, adding to the Howard government's attention to national security. In 2004, this policy issue also received attention due to the Indian Ocean tsunami that struck on Boxing Day. The devastation and loss of life resulted in a commitment of immediate assistance, aid and a rebuilding package of AUD\$1 billion from the Howard government. It is important to note that while the tsunami prompted a sizeable response in aid, Australia's foreign-aid expenditure fell under the Howard government from 0.32% of gross national income (GNI) when it came to office in 1996, to 0.25% of GNI in 2005, before rising to 0.3% of GNI in 2006 and 2007.<sup>309</sup>

#### 4.18 Government Operations

While many acknowledge that privatisation initiatives began under the Hawke/Keating governments, the Howard government remained committed to this approach.<sup>310</sup> As with its predecessors, the Howard government contracted out government functions to make budget and efficiency savings. This began by moving the provision of government information-technology services and cleaning services to private contractors. The planning for outsourcing the information-

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<sup>305</sup> A large amount of literature examines the relationship between Australia and the United States during the period of the Howard government. Examples can be seen in L. Cox and B. O'Connor, 'Australia, the US, and the Vietnam and Iraq Wars: "Hound Dog, Not Lapdog"', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2012, pp. 173–187; M. Gurry, 'Issues in Australian Foreign Policy, July to December 2002', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 39, 2002, pp. 227–243; M. Kelton, 'More than an Ally'? *Contemporary Australia–US Relations*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008; E. Paul, *Little America: Australia, the 51st State*, Ann Arbor, Pluto Press, 2006; G. Sheridan, *The Partnership: The Inside Story of the US–Australian Alliance under Bush and Howard*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2007.

<sup>306</sup> G. Dyer, *Future: Tense: The Coming World Order*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 2004, p. 96.

<sup>307</sup> For examples of this debate, see M. Beeson, 'Australia's Relationship with the United States: The Case for Greater Independence', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2003, pp. 387–405; J. Cammilleri, 'A Leap into the Past—In the Name of the National Interest', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2003, pp. 431–453; A. Capling, 'An Australia–US Trade Agreement?', *Policy, Organisation & Society*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2001, pp. 11–27.

<sup>308</sup> D. McCraw, 'The Howard Government's Foreign Policy: Really Realist?', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2008, pp. 465–480.

<sup>309</sup> Cited in Lewis, 'Howard's Government'.

<sup>310</sup> Aulich and O'Flynn, p. 377.

technology services began under the Keating government as a method of developing the Australian information-technology industry.<sup>311</sup>

In its first budget, the Howard government announced it would sell a number of commercial enterprises within government, including the car fleet and property management and maintenance services. The Minister for Administrative Services, David Jull, describing his approach as a ‘yellow pages’ approach, that is, if services were advertised in the yellow pages, there was no reason for them to be provided by the government.<sup>312</sup> The first term Howard government privatised several public enterprises such as the national shipping line, Australian Defence Industries and, as mentioned, the partial sale of Telstra. Many agencies that provided services to the public sector such as car hire, travel services and office removals had their operations moved to the private sector.<sup>313</sup>

In 1997, there were reforms to the Commonwealth Employment Service, shifting employment services for the unemployed away from the public sector to private firms that tendered to provide welfare services. Centrelink, a newly created body, became responsible for coordinating, not delivering, welfare services. The Job Network was created, which meant that non-government employment services competed with government providers to deliver services to unemployed job seekers. Taylor describes the approach of the Howard government as ‘almost imperceptible, but little by little the Howard government has been transferring responsibility for public service delivery to the private sector. While abolition of the Commonwealth Employment Service and the creation of the Jobs Network represented the biggest transfer of responsibilities to private sector providers, there is ample evidence of a growing trend across a range of portfolios’.<sup>314</sup>

#### **4.19 Public Lands, Water Management, Colonial and Territorial Issues**

The most contentious and divisive aspect of policy in this area was that of indigenous issues. This section limits discussion of this policy area to this issue. When considering expenditure in this policy area, it is important to acknowledge that under the Howard government, spending on programmes specific to indigenous Australians increased from AUD\$1.7 billion in 1996–1997 to AUD\$3.1 billion in 2005–2006.<sup>315</sup>

Soon after the election of the Howard government in 1996, the *Bringing Them Home* report of the Human Rights Commission inquiry, chaired by Sir Ronald Wilson was tabled in federal

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid., p. 374.

<sup>312</sup> M. Taylor, ‘No Holding Back the Outsourcing Flow-on’, *The Canberra Times*, 11 April 1997.

<sup>313</sup> Aulich and O’Flynn, p. 372.

<sup>314</sup> M. Taylor, ‘Privatisation by Stealth’, *The Canberra Times*, 4 February 1999.

<sup>315</sup> Treasury, *Budget Overview 2005–2006*, May 2005, p. 21.

Parliament. This report was the result of a national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The inquiry was initiated by the Keating government, and details the stories and experiences of indigenous Australian children removed from their families. The report described the practices of past governments in removing indigenous Australian children from their parents as ‘an act of genocide’. Kelly provides a succinct summary of Howard’s approach to indigenous issues:

he distrusted the political and legal infrastructure built around reconciliation—he rejected an official apology, rejected the notion of a Stolen Generation, was sceptical of communal land rights, felt Aboriginals must find their future in the mainstream economy, never really accepted ATSIC, opposed a treaty, rejected the notion of cultural separatism, was against the High Court’s Wik decision, opposed acceptance of Aboriginal customary law and worried about the meaning of self-determination.<sup>316</sup>

The Howard government inherited a policy framework for indigenous affairs that needed to be renegotiated, but new policy arrived very late in Howard’s final term in the form of an intervention in the Northern Territory.

The Howard government came to office in 1996 with a promise to amend the *Native Title Act* to make it more workable for the agriculture and mining sectors. The Wik judgement, finding that pastoral leases and native title could co-exist, was handed down not long after the Coalition came to power, making the delivery of that promise more difficult for the Howard government. This judgement was immersed in fears from pastoralists and the mining industry that native-title rights would have a negative effect on their livelihoods and developments. However, indigenous Australians hoped that the case would realise the recognition of their rights and autonomy over land. In response to the Wik judgement, the Howard government developed a 10-point plan. The passing of the legislation through the Senate in response to the High Court Wik case produced the longest debate in the Senate on any measure since Federation.<sup>317</sup> The Howard government’s response to the Wik judgement became symbolic of its approach to indigenous issues.

An enduring image of the Howard government’s relationship with indigenous policy came in Howard’s address to the Reconciliation Council in Melbourne in 1997 where he spoke about the Stolen Generations. In response to Howard’s address, many people in the audience stood and turned their backs on the Prime Minister as he spoke. Part of Howard’s speech was as follows:

we need to acknowledge openly that the treatment accorded to many Indigenous Australians over a significant period of European settlement represents the most blemished chapter in our history. Clearly there were injustices done and no-one should obscure or minimize them.

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<sup>316</sup> Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, pp. 342–343.

<sup>317</sup> Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 276.

We need to acknowledge as a nation what European settlement has meant for the first Australians, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and in particular the assault on their traditions and the discrimination and violence they endured over many decades.<sup>318</sup>

He went on to say the following:

I feel deep sorrow for those of my fellow Australians who suffered injustices under the practices of past generations towards indigenous people. Equally I am sorry for the hurt and trauma many people here today may continue to feel as a consequence of those practices ... Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control.<sup>319</sup>

Howard then cautioned against depicting Australia's history since European settlement as an exercise in imperialism, exploitation and racism:

Such a portrayal is a gross distortion and deliberately neglects the overall story of great Australian achievement that is there in our history to be told, and such an approach will be repudiated by the overwhelming majority of Australians who are proud of what this country has achieved although inevitably acknowledging the blemishes in its past history.<sup>320</sup>

Howard then discussed the government's response to the Wik decision, which was met by interjections from some members of the audience. He responded to these interjections by shouting over them, and this image became a lasting and negative symbol of his government's attitude to indigenous issues.

In Howard's victory speech after the 1998 election, he committed himself to Aboriginal reconciliation: 'I want to commit myself, very genuinely, to the cause of true reconciliation with the Aboriginal people of Australia'.<sup>321</sup> According to Peter Costello, 'this came as a shock to me and no doubt to just about everyone else who was listening. If you had taken bets on the issues Howard would mention in his 1998 victory speech it would have been long odds on Aboriginal reconciliation'.<sup>322</sup> Howard preferred to speak about reconciliation as a 'practical reconciliation', a concept that he defined as one that 'embraced the totality of policies in individual areas designed to help Indigenous people'.<sup>323</sup>

In 2004, the Howard government abolished ATSIC, which had been established in 1989 for the aim of increasing the autonomy of decision making for indigenous people. The Howard government determined that little progress in improvements for indigenous people had been

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Cited in P. Costello, *The Costello Memoirs: The Age of Prosperity*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2009, p. 148.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Howard, *Lazarus Rising*, p. 273.

achieved, and elected to adopt a model of ‘mainstreaming’ the delivery of services to the indigenous community in the same way they were delivered to the non-indigenous community.<sup>324</sup> Howard’s views on ATSIC were that ‘it strikes at the heart of the unity of the Australian people. In the name of righting the wrongs done against Aboriginal people, the legislation adopts the misguided notion of believing that if one creates a Parliament within the Australian community for Aboriginal people, one will solve and meet all of those problems’.<sup>325</sup> The Indigenous Affairs Minister, Senator Amanda Vanstone, made the following statement in a media release about the abolition of ATSIC: ‘No longer will governments persist with the ATSIC experiment that has achieved so little for indigenous people. No longer will we see precious funds diverted and wasted on meaningless symbolic gestures or to indulge the personal whims of ATSIC Commissioners’.<sup>326</sup>

In response to the release of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report,<sup>327</sup> the Howard government determined that there was a need for the federal government to intervene. The intervention included a range of measures, including removing the permit system that required outsiders to obtain a permit to enter an Aboriginal community, imposing restrictions on the sale of alcohol, banning possession of X-rated pornography, quarantining welfare payments, increasing police presence, and deploying the Army to assist in the intervention. Funding for these measures exceeded half a billion dollars.<sup>328</sup>

Along with the images that emanated from Howard’s Reconciliation Meeting in Melbourne in 1997, the enduring issue for many in this policy area is Howard’s steadfast refusal to use the word ‘apology’ and give an apology to indigenous Australians. This refusal came to represent a division for the entirety of his term in government.

#### **4.20 Conclusion**

The qualitative analysis of this chapter has summarised some of the Howard government’s major reforms and initiatives in each of PAP’s topic codes. It thus recognises the dual elements of the policy agenda: implementation and attention. The analysis in the following chapter adopts a quantitative approach to mapping the Howard government’s policy agenda, while the present chapter has provided a sharper picture of the content of the Howard government’s policy agenda.

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<sup>324</sup> P. Costello, *The Costello Memoirs: The Age of Prosperity*, 2009, p. 214.

<sup>325</sup> J. Howard, House of Representatives, 11 April, 1989.

<sup>326</sup> A. Vanstone, ‘Media Release—Australian Government Changes to Indigenous Affairs Services Commence Tomorrow’, Minister Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Reconciliation, 30 June 2004.

<sup>327</sup> ‘The Little Children are Sacred Report’ is the report of a board of inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse commissioned by the Northern Territory Government.

<sup>328</sup> Costello, p. 215.



This chapter is necessarily selective; it has provided an overview of the major initiatives of the government, and important context for the following two chapters.

The Howard government (as all governments do) paid attention to policy issues to which it afforded importance. This research argues that the information presented in this chapter, and the following chapter, accurately represents the policies that governments prioritised during the period of analysis, and that these measurements are not an abstract representation of a coding system. This chapter, when mapped onto the data that emerges in the following chapter provides surety that the claims this research makes about its measuring are accurate. The argument here is not that a description of the kind of policy intervention or the extent to which a measure from budget speeches or Acts of Parliament in the following chapter is controversial or ideological. Chapter 6 will focus on the ideological nature of the policy agenda, but the present and following chapter emphasise a particular aspect of policy making that measures the proportion of attention paid to policy areas by the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. Therefore, the observations are based on the prioritisation of issues. Applying the PAP coding method delivers a new manner of considering the Howard government and its policies, thus creating a valuable addition to the approaches adopted in the literature to consider the legacy of the Howard government.

## **Chapter 5 Policy Agendas Project Analysis**

This chapter moves from the macro-level approach in the previous chapter to a detailed analysis of the data collected by coding the budget speeches, Governor General speeches and Acts of Parliament of the Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments to determine whether the Howard government's policy agenda was different from that of these Labor governments. This chapter argues that the Howard government cannot be characterised as having created a major disruption or break of the policy agenda that much of the literature claims it did. It provides evidence to support the argument that the Howard era can be understood as remarkably similar to that of the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. This chapter consists of five sections. The first section presents four key themes that emerge from the PAP analysis. The second section revisits the account of the advantages and limitations of PAP that were detailed in Chapter 3, and provides an explanation of the documents used for this analysis. The third section details the tests undertaken in this research and provides the results of the analysis. The fourth section identifies where policy punctuations occurred during the period and their frequency. The fifth section maps the agenda changes in each of the 19 policy-agenda topic codes. The chapter concludes by reviewing the results of the empirical analysis.

Much of the data in this chapter is presented graphically, despite more technical methods of analysis being available. There are two reasons for adopting this approach. The first, and most important, reason is that while less technical, the graphs make the necessary points important to this research, negating the need for more advanced techniques. It is hoped that this approach broadens the usefulness of the work. Second, there are a number of issues with fitting time-series analytical techniques to agenda models. Statistical models have been fitted to the data here, and the results have been presented with additional graphical representations in Appendices 2 and 3. One of the key problems with adopting more complex models for this research is that relationships among variables change during the period of the agenda being considered. In regression models, trends can be incorporated with agenda dynamics modelled as deviations from trends. The unpredictable surges and declines in agenda dynamics is the fundamental problem for time-series modelling. A more complex model using regression or other techniques could be adopted, but the models would be different for each case. This research is concerned with answering a central research question: whether the Howard government can be considered to have constituted a major policy punctuation in Australian politics when compared to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. It is not engaged with building a theory of agenda change, which means that a simple and less technical approach provides the capacity to answer the guiding question of the research.

To interpret much of the data will be presented, it is useful to begin with a list of the governments and their term in office from 1983 to 2011:

- Bob Hawke: March 1983 – December 1991
- Paul Keating: December 1991 – March 1996
- John Howard: March 1996 – December 2007
- Kevin Rudd: December 2007 – June 2010
- Julia Gillard: June 2010 – end of period of analysis December 2011

## 5.1 Key Themes

Five broad findings emerge from an analysis of the data; these are outlined in this section. All of the findings are discussed in further detail throughout this chapter. The trends are presented in Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. The first finding to emerge is that there are very few significant differences<sup>329</sup> found in the level of attention the Howard government paid to specific policy issues when compared to level of attention paid by the Hawke/Keating and Rudd/Gillard governments, with only four examples of significant differences occurring in the proportion of attention paid to particular policy areas in budget speeches. These differences occur in macroeconomics (where Hawke particularly focuses significantly more attention than the Howard); health (where Howard focuses significantly more attention than Hawke and Keating); energy (where Keating and Rudd/Gillard focus significantly more attention than Howard); and foreign trade (where Hawke and Keating focus significantly more attention than Howard). There are two examples of a statistically significant difference occurring in the proportion of attention paid to policy areas in the Acts of Parliament data. These are in the areas of health (where Howard focuses more attention than Hawke and Keating) and agriculture (where Howard focuses less attention than Hawke but more attention than Rudd/Gillard). There are no significant differences found in the Governor General speeches.

The second theme to emerge is that all the governments analysed prioritised the same policy areas. This can be seen clearly in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 and Table 5 below, with macroeconomics, social welfare, labour employment, health and government operations always appearing in the top-five issues in the proportion of attention they received by government. The third theme is that not only do these governments prioritise the same policy issues but they allocate similar proportions of their attention to them.

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<sup>329</sup> In this chapter, the term ‘significant’ refers to statistical significance; that is, the probability that an effect is not due to just chance alone. In statistics, a result is considered significant not because it is important or meaningful, but because it has been predicted as unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. To determine if a result is statistically significant, a *p*-value is calculated, which is the probability of observing an effect given that the null hypothesis is true. The null hypothesis is rejected if the *p*-value is less than the significance or  $\alpha$  level. The  $\alpha$  level is the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true and is usually set at 0.05 (5%), which is the most widely used. For further detail, see F.L. Coolidge, *Statistics: A Gentle Introduction*, 3rd edn., Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2012, pp. 1–38; R.M. Sirkin, *Statistics for the Social Sciences*, 3rd edn., Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2005, pp. 271–316.

The fourth key point is that the Labor governments and the Howard government chose not to prioritise the same policy areas. As demonstrated in Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, the policy areas of civil rights, community development, space and science and public lands are at the bottom of the agenda for all these governments. Interestingly, some policy areas such as environment and indigenous issues remain at the bottom of the agenda in the government attention they are paid, despite often receiving high levels of media attention.

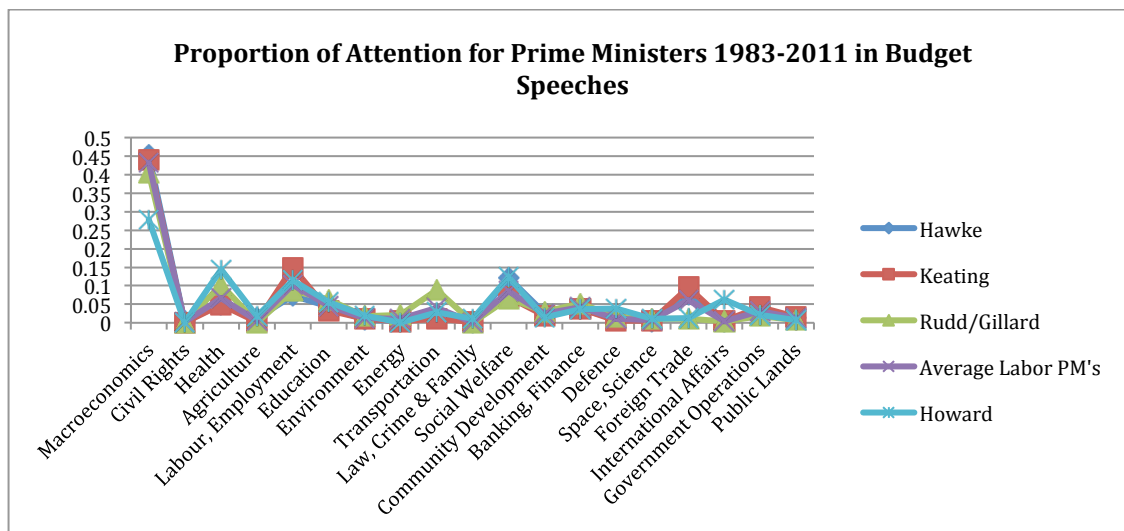
The final trend that emerges from the analysis is that the greatest changes in particular policy areas have occurred not in newly elected governments or when there is a change of government, but rather in re-elected governments in their second, third or fourth terms. The Keating and Gillard re-elected governments have not been considered new governments by this research. Of the most significant 20 changes in the proportion of a government's attention paid to an issue, only two occurred in the first term of government. The first was under Howard in the area of space, science and technology in 1997 (due to the partial sale of Telstra) and the second was under Rudd in 2009 in energy (due to the carbon-pollution reduction scheme and clean-energy initiatives).<sup>330</sup>

As seen In Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 below, the argument here is that all the governments considered from 1983 to 2011 chose to prioritise the same policy areas, and chose to pay the same group of policy areas minimal levels of attention, thus creating a stable policy agenda. The analysis contains 57 occasions in which difference may be seen in 19 policy codes from three data sets: budget speeches, Governor General speeches and Acts of Parliament. From these 57 measures, only six significant differences, seen in Table 5.1 below, can be identified between the proportion of attention paid to policy issues by the Howard government compared to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it.

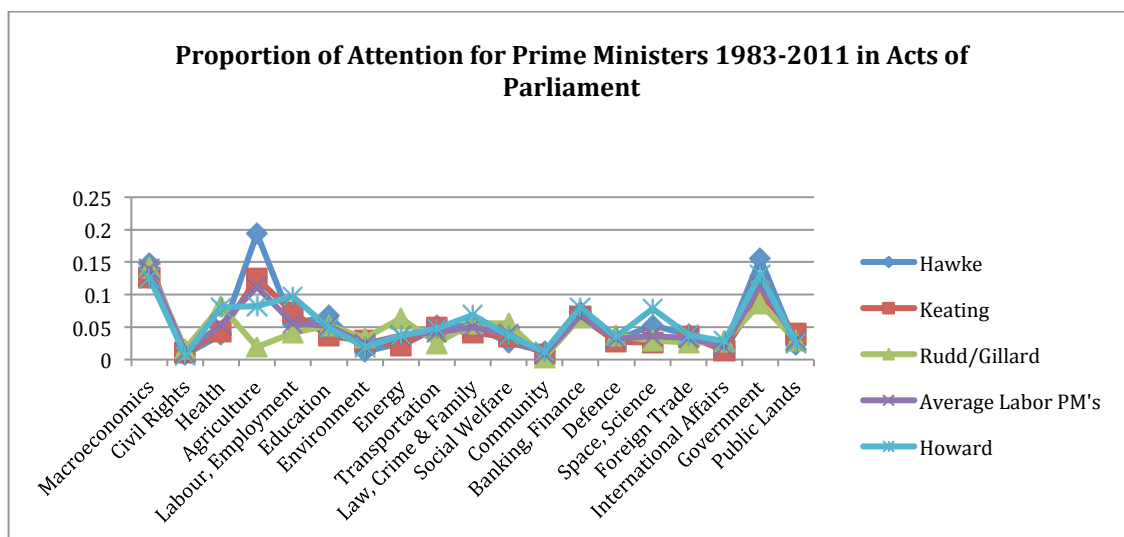
**Table 5.1: Significant Difference in Proportion of Attention under Howard**

Topic Code	Unit of Analysis	Government difference > or < Howard
Macroeconomics	Budget Speech	Hawke > proportion of attention
Health	Budget Speech and Acts of Parliament	Howard > proportion of attention than Hawke & Keating
Agriculture	Acts of Parliament	Hawke > Howard; Howard > Rudd/Gillard
Energy	Budget Speech	Keating, Rudd/Gillard > proportion of attention
Foreign Trade	Budget Speech	Hawke & Keating > proportion of attention

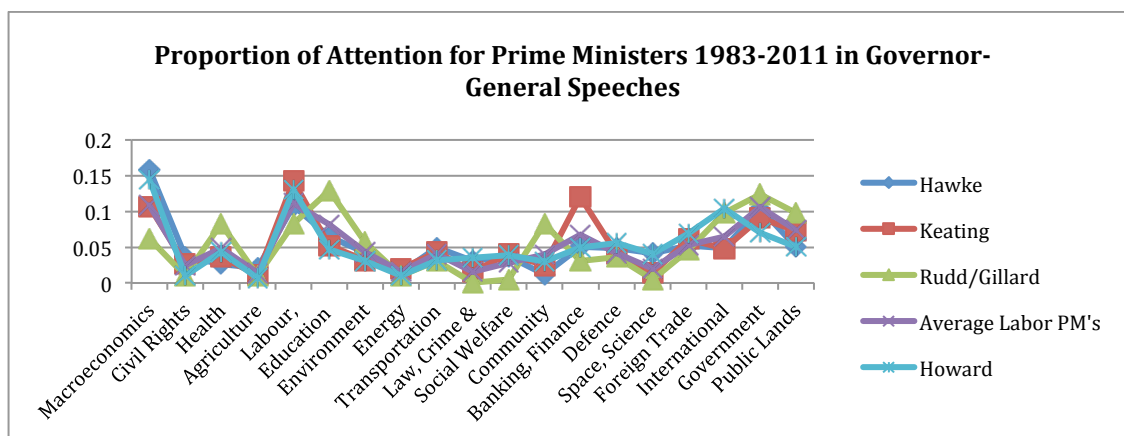
<sup>330</sup> For a full analysis of this result, see the section in this chapter on punctuations and the appendix for graphical representations of the results of the analysis.



**Figure 5.1: Proportion of Attention for Prime Ministers 1983–2011 in Budget Speeches**



**Figure 5.2: Proportion of Attention for Prime Ministers 1983–2011 in Acts of Parliament**



**Figure 5.3: Proportion of Attention for Prime Ministers 1983–2011 in Governor-General Speeches**

The changes in attention paid to the different policy areas are explored more fully in the final section of this chapter, where each of the policy codes are analysed individually. A detailed list of the Australian PAP codes and their sub-topic codes are presented in Appendix 1. The following section provides an account of some of the advantages and limitations of the PAP coding scheme and an explanation of the documents used in this analysis.<sup>331</sup>

## **5.2 Advantages and Limitations of the Policy Agendas Project**

The comparative statistical data in this chapter is not designed to conclude debate on the relative performance and virtues of each of the governments analysed. It is not possible to achieve a consensus on values and the correctness of the relative priorities of individual governments. As outlined in Chapter 3, the application of the PAP coding scheme for this research provides three distinct advantages over other approaches that could have been chosen to analyse the Howard government. First, coding documents allows for the long period that this research considers. Second, it facilitates assessment of the attention paid to issues across a wide range of policy areas. Third, and perhaps most importantly for this research, the consistent coding scheme allows a comparison between different periods. As a result, the governments led by Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard can be examined individually across individual policy areas, providing a basis for empirical comparison.

In applying PAP to analyse agenda changes, three areas can be brought into empirical focus for the Howard era. The first is the overall policy priorities of the government that includes identifying which policy areas received most of the Howard government's attention. The second is that analysis of the PAP data provides a platform for comparison with the policy agenda that existed before and after the Howard government. Third, the analysis of the PAP data allows identification of when agenda changes occur, and the nature and longevity of the change, thereby revealing whether the change was sustained over the duration of the Howard tenure or whether there was a sudden punctuation when the Howard government was elected.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the criticisms of the use of PAP in speeches as a proxy for policy. While this is a reasonable criticism, its validity is diminished in this research because there are three types of document sources used for analysis. The Governor General speech is written by the Prime Minister, reflecting policy and political priorities after an election. The Governor General speech may be used for a series of strategic purposes that may not reflect all the intentions of the incoming government, but it is reasonable to assume that it reflects some of them. The budget

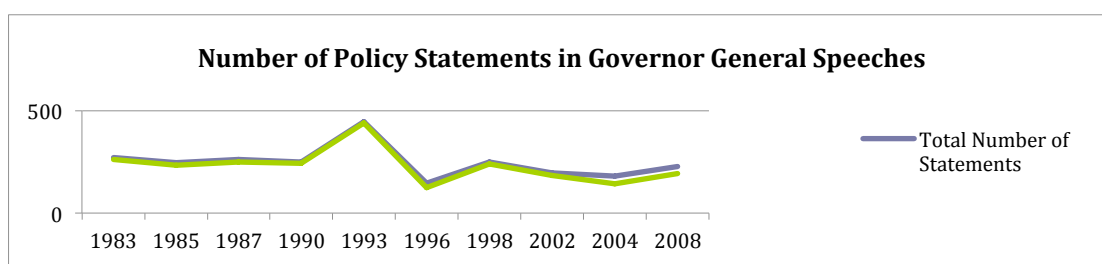
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<sup>331</sup> This discussion is revisiting a greater depth of material in Chapter 3, which outlines the methods used for this project.

speech is delivered by the Federal Treasurer to accompany the annual budget. This document, while it is a speech, outlines how policies are resourced and reflects spending plans and the allocation of financial resources. The final proxy measure used here is Acts of Parliament. Considering Acts passed by a government can be understood as a measure of government actions in particular policy areas. The decision to analyse these documents was straightforward. Unlike in the United Kingdom, political parties in Australia do not publish regular manifesto documents outlining their policies.

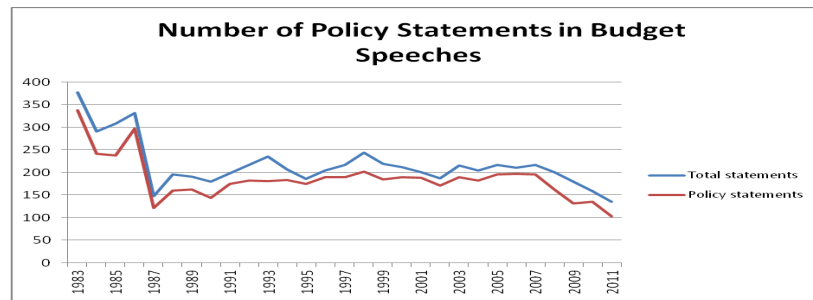
The value of this analysis is that considering all three of these sources enables the mapping of changes in the agenda to test whether the Howard government constituted a major disruption to the Australian political agenda. It offers a solid foundation of empirical research and is a useful source of data. It is important to remember that PAP data reveals the relative attention paid to an issue, not the absolute attention. This means that it does not consider changes in the size of the agenda. PAP measures attention through *how much* a government is saying about particular policy issues, and not *what* it is saying; it is not a measure of ideology or an indicator of the direction of policy. The test here is whether the distribution of changes in the policy agenda takes a statistically normal form with relatively few small or large changes in the proportion of attention under the Howard government or whether there is evidence of the presence of a large number of small and large changes.

Governor General speeches occurred on 10 occasions during the period analysed in this chapter. Hawke was Prime Minister for four of the speeches (1983, 1985, 1987, 1990), Keating for one (1993), Howard for four (1996, 1998, 2002, 2004) and Rudd for one (2008). There is no Governor General speech analysed during Gillard's time in office, which is part of the reasoning for considering the Rudd/Gillard government as one for the purposes of analysis. As can be seen in Figure 5.4, the speeches are relatively stable in their length.



**Figure 5.4: Policy Statements in Governor General Speeches 1983–2011**

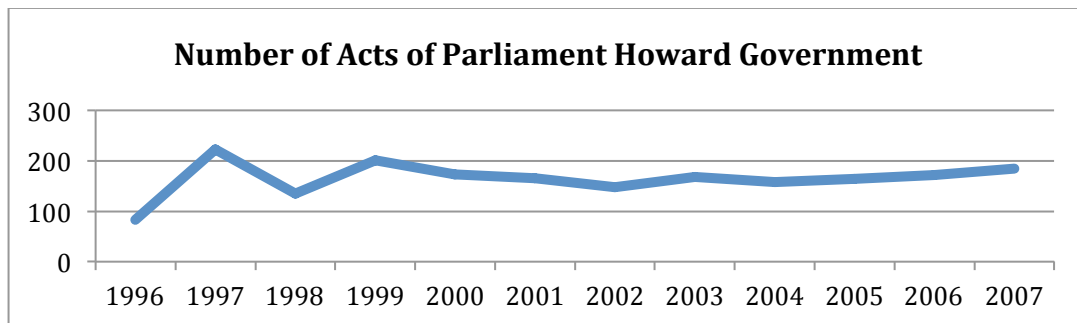
The second group of documents analysed for this research is budget speeches. The budget speech delivered by the Federal Treasurer can be understood as an expression of a government's priorities in policy issues. Figure 5.5 presents the number of policy statements contained each year in the budget speeches from 1983 to 2011. It is evident that since 1987, the budget speeches have been remarkably consistent in length.



**Figure 5.5: Policy Statements in Budget Speeches 1983–2011**

The third group of documents is the Acts of Parliament. It can be argued that laws are the most definitive indicators of policy change, as there is always a legal aspect to policy change in industrialised countries.<sup>332</sup> While enacted legislation cannot completely capture the approach of a government, as there are many reforms implemented that do not require legislation. However, it is undoubtedly a further manner by which to provide a succinct and useful understanding of a government's policy agenda, particularly when used in conjunction with Governor General speeches and budget speeches.

During the period analysed here, the Australian federal Parliament passed 4,893 pieces of legislation. All of these Acts have been coded for this research using PAP. The Hawke government passed 1,567 pieces of legislation, the Keating government passed 738. The Howard government, as seen in Figure 5.6 below passed 1,956, with its busiest year in the number of pieces of legislation enacted being its first full year after election, 1997. The Rudd/Gillard government passed 631 Acts of Parliament from its election in 2008 to the end of 2011.



**Figure 5.6: Acts of Parliament 1983–2011**

What is striking about the figure above is that the number of Acts passed by the Howard government remained relatively constant, even after achieving a majority in the Senate. There is no sharp rise in the number of pieces of legislation passed through the Parliament during this period and legislative activity did not reach the level of the Acts passed in the Howard government's first term in office.

<sup>332</sup> B.W. Hogwood and B.G. Peters, *Policy Dynamics*, Brighton, Wheatsheaf, 1983.



Macroeconomics is the policy area that experiences the greatest number of legislation passed in the period under study, with 660 Bills passed, followed by 613 Acts of Parliament in the category of government operations. Three other policy areas: agriculture (537), banking and finance (352) and labour, employment and immigration (331) also had relatively high volumes of legislation enacted between 1983 and 2011. Three policy areas that had fewer than one hundred pieces of legislation passed over this period were civil rights (45), community development (51) and environment (97).

It is important to acknowledge some of the differences between the data sources used for this analysis. The Governor General speeches do not occur annually, whereas budget speeches are given every year, and large numbers of Acts of Parliament are passed every year. There are also differences in the nature of the issues that are prioritised in the Governor General speeches from those prioritised in the budget speeches and Acts of Parliament. Conversely, there are higher levels of similarity in the policy agenda between budget speeches and Acts of Parliament. Budget speeches experience higher levels of change in the proportion of attention devoted to particular policy areas than Governor General speeches. For example, of the largest 20 changes in proportion of attention levels within particular policy areas, only two of these were found in Governor General speeches. Appendix 2 provides graphical representations of the proportion of attention paid to each policy area by the governments analysed here for Governor General speeches, budget speeches and Acts of Parliament.

Given that all these instruments are signals of priorities and choices that governments make at a particular point in time, each data source has been afforded equal importance in calculating the proportion of attention paid to particular policy areas. As a result, these documents are analysed separately, rather than by combining them or providing an average proportion of attention for each policy issue. While this presents a more complex approach, it is reasonable to claim that it produces more meaningful results.

A further decision about the way the data is analysed sees the Rudd and Gillard governments considered together rather than as separate governments. This decision was made for three reasons. The first is that during the period analysed by this research, the Gillard government is the only government that has no data to analyse on Governor General speeches. The second reason is that the Gillard government also has only two budget speeches and two years of legislation data to be analysed, at the time that this research needed to be written up, and the Rudd government also has small amounts of data. The third reason is that attributing Acts of Parliament or the budget speech in 2010 to either Rudd or to Gillard requires arbitrary decisions about the ownership of particular initiatives. For example, the legislation on the minerals resource rent tax passed under Gillard's leadership but began under the Rudd government. As such, the decision was made to

consider these two Prime Ministers as one government, and will be referred to in this research as the Rudd/Gillard government. Rudd and Gillard were both leaders of the Australian Labor Party, with the transition from Rudd to Gillard occurring midway through 2010. Their combined term considered here is equal to the Keating term in the number of years in office, which means it is more appropriate for comparative purposes to combine them rather than use only one year of Gillard data.

## 5.3 Results

### 5.3.1 Budget speeches

As detailed in Chapter 3, four budget speeches (1984, 1989, 1996, 2007) were blind coded using the Australian PAP Codebook, producing a very high reliability, with a Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.942$ .<sup>333</sup> This means that the two coders coded the sentences of the budget speech in the same manner 94% of the time.

### 5.3.2 Tests for normality and homogeneity of variance

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test is run on the data. It examines the equality of continuous, one-dimensional probability distributions and can be used to compare a sample with a reference probability distribution or to compare two samples. It quantifies the distance between the empirical distribution function of the sample and the cumulative distribution function of the reference distribution or between the empirical distribution functions of two samples. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test is considered one of the most useful for comparing two samples and can serve as a goodness of fit test. Kolmogorov–Smirnov ( $D$ ) tests were conducted on each of the budget topics to test for normality.<sup>334</sup> Macroeconomics,  $D(28) = .17, p = .035$ ; civil rights,  $D(28) = .53, p < .001$ ; agriculture,  $D(28) = .28, p < .001$ ; education,  $D(28) = .17, p = .037$ ; environment,  $D(28) = .29, p < .001$ ; energy,  $D(28) = .44, p < .001$ ; transportation,  $D(28) = .21, p = .004$ ; law,  $D(28) = .42, p < .001$ ; community development,  $D(28) = .18, p = .022$ ; defence,  $D(28) = .28, p < .001$ ; space and technology  $D(28) = .30, p < .001$ ; foreign trade  $D(28) = .18, p = .017$ ; international affairs,  $D(28) = .32, p < .001$ ; government operations,  $D(28) = .195, p = .008$ ; and public land/territory,  $D(28) = .25, p < .001$  were all significantly non-normal.

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<sup>333</sup> For further explanations of the test, see L.J. Cronback, 'Coefficient Alpha and the Internal Structure of Tests', *Psychometrika*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1951, pp. 297–334; W. Revelle and R. Zinbarg, 'Coefficients Alpha, Beta, Omega, and the Gib: Comments on Sijtsma', *Psychometrika*, no. 74, no. 1, 2009, pp. 145–154; R. Elsinga, M. Te Grotenhuis, and B. Pelzer, 'The Reliability of a Two-item Scale: Pearson, Cronbach or Spearman–Brown?', *International Journal of Public Health*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2013, pp. 637–642.

<sup>334</sup> See the following works for further detail: W.T. Eadie, D. Drijard, F.E. James, M. Roos, and B. Sadoulet, *Statistical Methods in Experimental Physics*, Amsterdam, North Holland, 1971, pp. 269–271; A. Stuart, K. Ord, and S. Arnold, *Classical Inference and the Linear Model*, Kendall's Advanced Theory of Statistics 2A, 6th edn., London, Arnold, pp. 25, 37–25, 43; M. Hazewinkel (ed.), 'Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test', *Encyclopedia of Mathematics*, 2001, Springer.

Variances between budget topics differed significantly for macroeconomics,  $F(2, 22) = 5.37$ ,  $p = .013$ ; agriculture,  $F(2, 22) = 4.64$ ,  $p = .021$ ; and law,  $F(2,22) = 11.42$ ,  $p < .001$ . This can be problematic, as inflated scores or outliers (i.e. one score that is substantially different to the others) can affect the entire result or statistical end product. As a result, Kruskal-Wallis, a nonparametric test (i.e. a test that does not rely on the data to be normally distributed or homogenous) was conducted.

### 5.3.3 Kruskal–Wallis test: testing differences between several independent groups

Kruskal–Wallis tests were used in this research to test differences between governments (i.e. the four groups: Hawke, Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard).<sup>335</sup> The test is a method used for comparing more than two samples that are independent. When the Kruskal–Wallis test leads to significant results, it means at least one of the samples is different from the other samples. There were significant differences in macroeconomics, health, energy and foreign trade. Given there were differences in these four areas, and the test does not identify where the differences occur, a follow-up test was conducted to analyse the specific sample pairs for significant differences. These tests allow for identifying *where* these differences were (i.e. which Prime Minister/s was/were mentioning each of the topics to a greater or lesser extent).

To conduct these tests, three direct comparisons were made between Prime Ministers. First, Howard and Hawke, second Howard and Keating, and third, Howard and Rudd/Gillard. Mann–Whitney tests were then conducted on the four topic codes: macroeconomics, health, energy and foreign trade, where there were significant differences detected using the three above comparisons. Mann–Whitney tests the null hypothesis that two populations are the same against an alternative hypothesis. The test involves the calculation of a statistic, usually termed  $U$ , whose distribution under the null hypothesis is known.<sup>336</sup>

The Kruskal–Wallis tests were conducted to test for differences between governments in the frequency of a topic in budget speeches. Mann–Whitney tests were conducted to follow up any significant findings, with a Bonferroni correction applied to test all effects at a .0167 level of

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<sup>335</sup> For further detail on the Kruskal–Wallis test, see J.D. Spurrier, ‘On the Null Distribution of the Kruskal–Wallis Statistic’, *Journal of Nonparametric Statistics*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2003, pp. 685–691; G.W. Corder and D.I. Foreman, *Nonparametric Statistics for Non-Statisticians*, Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons, 2009, pp. 99–105; Kruskal and Wallis, ‘Use of Ranks in One-criterion Variance Analysis’, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, vol. 47, no. 260, 1952, pp. 583–621; Siegel and Castellan, *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioural Sciences*, 2nd edn., New York, McGraw-Hill, 1988.

<sup>336</sup> For a further explanation of the test, see H.B. Mann and D.R. Whitney, ‘On a Test of Whether One of Two Random Variables is Stochastically Larger than the Other’, *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1947, pp. 50–60; M.P. Fay and M.A. Proschan, ‘Wilcoxon–Mann–Whitney or t-test? On Assumptions for Hypothesis Tests and Multiple Interpretations of Decision Rules’, *Statistics Surveys*, vol. 4, 2010, pp. 1–39; E.L. Lehmann, *Elements of Large Sample Theory*, Springer, 1999, p. 176; W.J. Conover, *Practical Nonparametric Statistics*, 2nd edn., John Wiley & Sons, 1980, pp. 225–226.

significance.<sup>337</sup> Macroeconomics was significantly different between governments:  $H(3) = 10.57$ ,  $p = .014$ . Hawke focused on macroeconomics significantly more than Howard ( $U = 12$ ,  $r = -.62$ ). However, there were no significant differences between Keating and Howard ( $U = 8$ ,  $r = -.56$ ), or between Rudd/Gillard and Howard ( $U = 16$ ,  $r = -.07$ ). Health was also significantly different between governments:  $H(3) = 14.61$ ,  $p = .002$ . Howard's attention to health was significantly greater than both Hawke ( $U = 9$ ,  $r = -.67$ ) and Keating ( $U = .5$ ,  $r = -.69$ ). However, there were no significant differences between Howard and Rudd/Gillard ( $U = 7$ ,  $r = -.39$ ). The attention to energy was significantly different across governments:  $H(3) = 19.76$ ,  $p < .001$ , such that Rudd/Gillard focused attention on energy significantly more than Howard ( $U = .00$ ,  $r = -.96$ ), and Keating significantly more than Howard ( $U = 12$ ,  $r = .69$ ). However, there were no significant differences between Howard and Hawke ( $U = 48$ ,  $r = 0$ ). Finally, significant differences existed between governments in the area of foreign trade:  $H(3) = 15.97$ ,  $p = .001$ . Hawke gave foreign trade significantly more attention than Howard ( $U = 10$ ,  $r = -.66$ ), as did Keating ( $U = .00$ ,  $r = -.77$ ) but there were no significant differences between Howard and Rudd/Gillard ( $U = 13.5$ ,  $r = -.17$ ).

#### 5.3.4 Agenda-stability measure

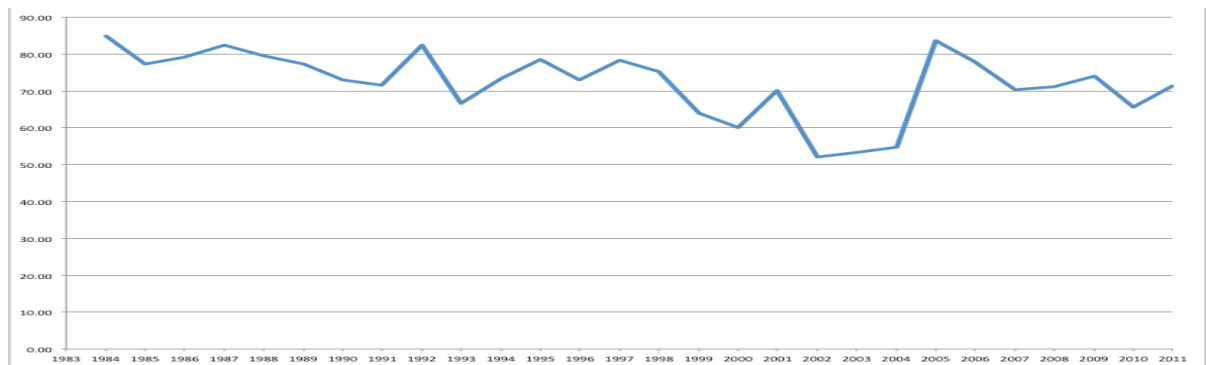
Following Siegelman and Buell's<sup>338</sup> measure of agenda stability, issue compositions of government agendas between 1983 and 2011 are presented in Figure 5.7 below. Figure 5.7 demonstrates to what degree a budget speech converges from the budget speech in the previous year. Budget speeches are most similar to the previous budget speech in their agenda coverage in 1984 (stability score 84.81), 1987 (stability score 82.52), 1992 (stability score 82.38) and 2005 (stability score 83.75). Key moments of divergence from the previous budget speech occur in 2002 (stability score 52.05), 2003 (stability score 53.39) and 2004 (stability score 54.76). These results are important, as they do not occur on the change of government, on the election of the Howard government, or the election of the Rudd government. These results occur during the course of the Howard government's third term in office. This is consistent with Kelly's argument that the Howard government made small changes in its first term, and took time to find its approach. It is interesting to note that the budget speeches that had the highest levels of divergence occurred in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The fact that the election of the Rudd government demonstrates a relatively high stability score of 71.22 in its first budget speech supports the notion that while Rudd

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<sup>337</sup> In statistics, Bonferroni correction is a method used to counteract the problem of multiple comparisons, and it controls the probability of false positives. Additional explanations of the method can be found in H. Abdi, 'Bonferroni and Šidák Corrections for Multiple Comparisons', in N.J. Salkind (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Measurement and Statistics*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2007; O.J. Dunn, 'Multiple Comparisons among Means', *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, vol. 56, no. 293, 1961, pp. 52–64.

<sup>338</sup> See L. Siegelman and E. Buell, 'Avoidance or Engagement? Issue Convergence in US Presidential Campaigns, 1960–2000', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2004, pp. 650–661.

spoke about his rejection of the Howard approach, their agendas were similar in their policy emphasis.



**Figure 5.7: Differences between Mean Convergence Scores in Budget Speeches**

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there were any differences between the mean convergences depending on the government at the time. There was a significant difference in convergence scores depending on the government:  $F(3) = 3.18, p = .042$ . Follow-up tests indicated that these significant differences only existed when comparing the convergence scores of Hawke and Howard:  $t(17) = 2.69, p = .015$ .

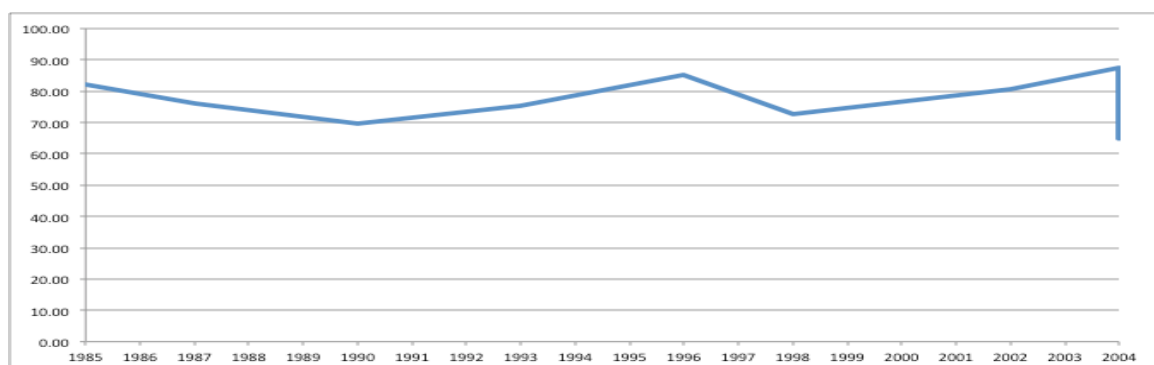
## 5.4 Results: Governor General Speeches

### 5.4.1 Kruskal–Wallis test: testing differences between several independent groups

Kruskal–Wallis tests were used to test differences between governments in Governor General speeches (four groups created). No significant differences were found in any of the topics.

### 5.4.2 Agenda-stability measure

Following Siegelman and Buell's<sup>339</sup> measure of agenda stability, issue compositions of government agendas in legislation between 1983 and 2011 were as follows:



**Figure 5.8: Differences between Mean Convergence Scores in Governor General Speeches**

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

A one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in convergence scores in Governor General speeches depending on the government at the time.

## 5.5 Results: Acts of Parliament

### 5.5.1 Kruskal–Wallis test: testing differences between several independent groups

Kruskal–Wallis tests were used to test differences between governments on legislation (four groups created). Significant differences between governments were found in health and agriculture.

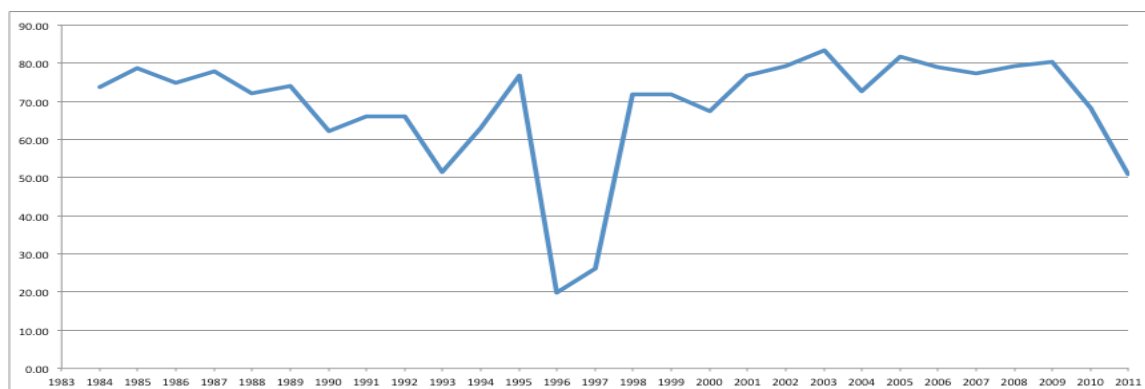
Kruskal–Wallis tests were conducted to test for differences between governments in frequency of policy topic in legislation. Mann–Whitney tests were used to follow up any significant findings, with a Bonferroni correction applied to test all effects at a .0167 level of significance. The attention paid to health was significantly different between governments:  $H(3) = 12.27$ ,  $p = .007$ . Howard attention to health was significantly more than Hawke ( $U = 11$ ,  $r = -.66$ ) and Keating ( $U = 7.5$ ,  $r = -.57$ ). Agriculture was also significantly different between governments:  $H(3) = 17.58$ ,  $p = .001$ . Hawke’s attention to agriculture was significantly more than Howard ( $U = 10$ ,  $r = -.67$ ), while Howard’s level of attention to agriculture was significantly more than Rudd/Gillard ( $U = 3$ ,  $r = -.64$ ).

### 5.5.2 Agenda-stability measure

Following Siegelman and Buell’s<sup>340</sup> measure of agenda stability, issue compositions of government agendas in legislation between 1983 and 2011 are presented in Figure 5.9, which demonstrates the degree to which the legislative agenda converges from the legislation enacted the previous year. The figure demonstrates that the legislative agenda reveals little difference from one year to the next until 1996 (stability score 19.74), the year that the Howard government was elected. Interestingly, 1997 also presents a high level of divergence from 1996 (stability score 26.11). It was expected that on the election of the Rudd government, the stability score would reveal a high level of divergence. However, with a score of 79.17, it reveals a high level of convergence with the Howard government. This is similar to the finding in the budget-speech data where the election of the Rudd government did not provide a significant change in the agenda.

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 5.9: Differences in Convergence Scores in Acts of Parliament**

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to verify whether there were any differences between the mean convergences depending on the government at the time. There was no significant difference found. While there is a significant dip in the convergence score (see Figure 5.9), it seems that over time, these effects ‘cancel each other out’ and equalise.

While aggregating data is useful, what is also important here is the identification and consideration of the punctuations themselves. The following section focuses on the largest changes that occurred from the Hawke government to the Rudd/Gillard government.

## 5.6 Policy Punctuations

As outlined in Chapter 3, the basic premise underpinning the notion of policy punctuations is that the political agenda is characterised by stability most of the time but occasional large changes occur.<sup>341</sup> To support the claims that the Howard government constituted a major turning point in modern Australian politics, it would be reasonable to expect to see clusters of policy punctuations occurring on the election of the Howard government. It would also be reasonable to expect large changes in the agenda on Rudd’s election. Given Rudd’s prediction in 2006 that Labor would replace the Howard government’s ‘unrestrained market capitalism’ with social-democratic policies that borrow the positive elements of liberalism such as security, liberty and property, but add ‘values of equity, solidarity and sustainability’ to assist ‘human, social and environmental capital necessary to make a market economy function effectively’.<sup>342</sup> With promises that Labor would provide greater attention to health, education, environment and infrastructure, a fluctuation in the degree of attention paid to such issues should be evident in the data. Policy punctuations offer a manner of analysing the nature and underlying factors associated with large changes in policy. Whether all policy punctuations have lasting effects and whether some punctuations lead to large

<sup>341</sup> F.R. Baumgartner and B.D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1993.

<sup>342</sup> Rudd, ‘Howard’s Brutopia’.

changes in the agenda are interesting factors to consider, but to provide evidence for the Howard government's transformative nature, punctuations should be evident. As such, all policy punctuations that constitute changes of greater than 500% are identified in this analysis.

As outlined in Chapter 3, there are a number of methods through which punctuations can be identified. This research adopts the one most often used: the method of proportional percentage change through which large changes from proportional change from a percentage share of the total agenda are identified,<sup>343</sup> which is  $Y = [(X_t/Z_t) - (X_{t-s}/Z_{t-1})] / (X_t/Z_t)$ . This is equal to the proportional change in the percentage of policy units within the total agenda space ( $Z$ ).

To conduct a more detailed analysis of the punctuations, punctuations greater than 500% have been chosen. The first punctuations to be identified are found in budget speeches that exceed 500% difference in the proportion of attention from the previous year. This yields 14 punctuations in 532 observations, 2.63% of the total, so these are relatively uncommon events (see Appendix 3 for a complete list). Clearly, if there are no punctuations, any change in proportion of attention has not been sufficiently large overall, or relative to the total agenda to be viewed as a punctuation. Acts of Parliament are next to be considered. This produces 13 punctuations in 532 observations, which is 2.44% of the total; these are also relatively uncommon events. Finally, in the Governor General speeches there are no punctuations in 190 observations. As such, overall, there are 27 punctuations in 1,254 observations, which is 2.15%.

While Governor General speeches outline the intentions of a government, and so by their nature are different from budget speeches and Acts of Parliament. The differences seen in this analysis indicate the emphasis placed on topic codes within Governor General speeches is not consistent with the actions taken in office. The fact that Governor General speeches experience a more stable agenda than the other two measures in this research indicates that some expectations are not being met in the promises and commitments made in Governor General speeches, and are not reflected in budget measures or legislative activity.

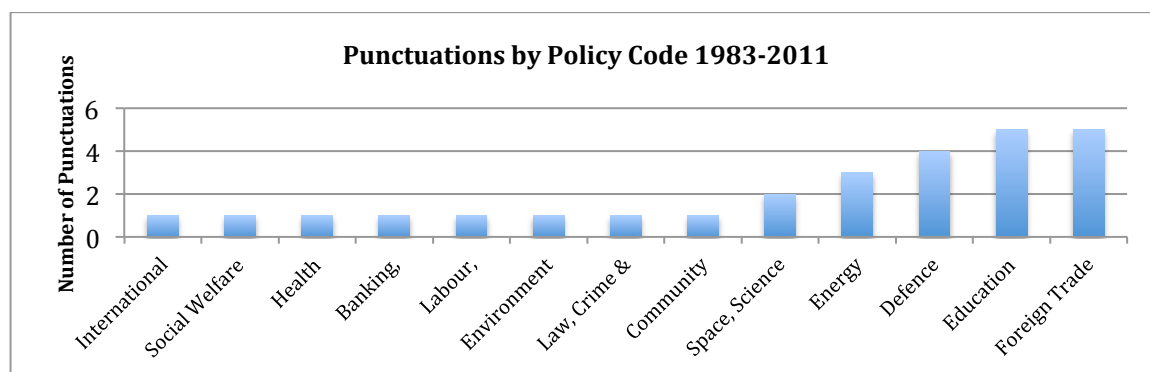
When the distribution of policy punctuations are considered, it would be expected that most punctuations would occur in topic codes that are not on the agenda or those that generally receive low proportions of attention. Figure 5.10 demonstrates that this expectation is consistent with the results in this analysis, with the highest number of punctuations occurring in the areas of foreign trade; defence; energy and space, science and technology. These are all areas that receive relatively

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<sup>343</sup> Seen in the work of F.R. Baumgartner, C. Breunig, C. Green-Pedersen, B.D. Jones, P.B. Mortensen, M. Nuytemans, and S. Walgrave, 'Punctuated Equilibrium in Comparative Perspective', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2009, pp. 603–620.



low levels of attention over time. The exception to this is education that receives relatively high proportions of government attention but also experiences increases in attention periodically.



**Figure 5.10: Punctuations by Policy Code 1983–2011**

In this research, budget speeches and Acts of Parliament experience punctuations differently in their frequency and timing. Punctuations in budget speeches are increasingly frequent. For example, in budget speeches, only two punctuations occurred in the 1980s, four in the 1990s and eight in the 2000s. Conversely, legislation punctuations have become less frequent, with one in the 1980s, 11 in the 1990s and only one in 2000s.

The four largest punctuations in budget speeches from 1983 to 2011 occurred during the Howard government's time in office, but they were late in the term (2002, 2003, 2004 and 2007), rather than early in his term when compared to the Labor agenda. That is, the Howard government differed greatest not from the Labor governments analysed here, but between the early and later terms of its own government. This demonstrates an intra-government shift rather than a contrast with other governments. For the budget speeches, there are no punctuations in the year after Howard won office and none occurred until four years after first winning government. This is consistent with anecdotal claims made in the literature about the Howard era, for example, in Manne's where he argues that the Howard government is best understood in 'two almost equal halves'.<sup>344</sup> The legislative punctuations look different, with all the Howard government's largest shifts in attention coming in the first term of office. After 1998, there were no other significant punctuations until the renewable-energy legislation introduced by the Gillard government in 2010.

It is key to remember here that while the Howard government has greater numbers of punctuations in both budget speeches and Acts of Parliament, it also held office for a greater period. Once the number of years is factored into the analysis, the number of punctuations that occurred under the Howard government is similar to that of the other governments.

<sup>344</sup> R. Manne, 'Little America: How John Howard has Changed Australia', *The Monthly*, March 2006, p. 20.

Graphical representations of each of the policy codes during the period of analysis are presented in Appendices 2 and 3.

## 5.7 Macroeconomics

This policy code includes the sub-topic codes of inflation; prices and interest rates; unemployment rate; monetary supply; central bank and the treasury; national budget and debt; taxation; tax policy and tax reform; industrial policy; price control and stabilisation; and other.<sup>345</sup>

As Figure 5.11 below demonstrates, all governments analysed during the period 1983–2011 spend far greater proportions of their budget speeches on macroeconomic issues than any other issues. Macroeconomics dominates budget speeches more than it does in Acts of Parliament or Governor General speeches. It is also one of only four policy areas where there is evidence of a statistically significant difference between the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. As discussed, macroeconomics experienced significantly different proportions of attention between governments:  $H(3) = 10.57$ ,  $p = .014$ . Hawke's attention to macroeconomics was significantly more than Howard ( $U = 12$ ,  $r = -.62$ ). However, there were no significant differences between Keating and Howard ( $U = 8$ ,  $r = -.56$ ), or between Rudd/Gillard and Howard ( $U = 16$ ,  $r = -.07$ ).

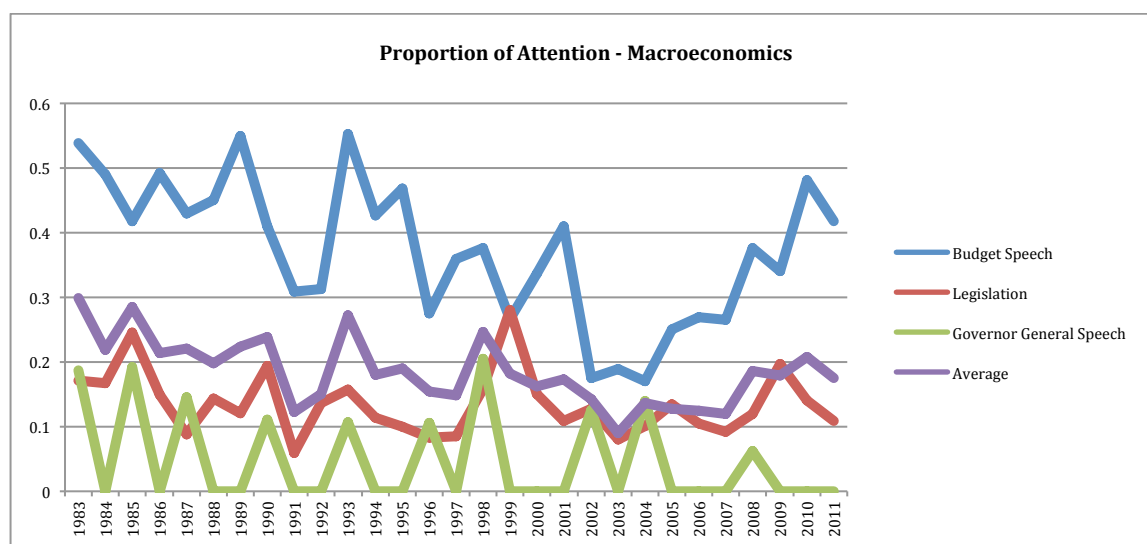
Acts of Parliament and Governor General speeches are similar in the proportion of attention paid to macroeconomic issues. Hawke's mean proportion of attention paid to this issue is 14.8% of his legislative agenda, and 15.8% in his Governor General speeches. Keating affords 12.7% of his legislative agenda and 10.6% of his Governor General speeches to the issue, while Howard affords 12.5% of his legislative agenda, and 14.4% of his Governor General speeches to macroeconomics. Rudd/Gillard afford macroeconomics 14.1% of their legislative agenda, and 6.1% of the Governor General speech to macroeconomics.

All the governments analysed here prioritise macroeconomics similarly in the attention it receives in Acts of Parliament and in Governor General speeches, apart from Rudd's 2008 Governor General speech where a sharply lower amount of attention to macroeconomics is evident. The Howard government is similar to the Labor governments in its attention to macroeconomic issues in Acts of Parliament and in the Governor General speeches.

As seen in the Figure 5.11, the highest proportion of any Prime Minister's attention paid to macroeconomic issues is under Keating in his government's 1993 budget speech, devoting 55.2% of his attention to this policy issue, while the lowest level is seen in the Rudd/Gillard government's Governor General speech in 2008, with 6.1% of attention allocated to macroeconomic issues.

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<sup>345</sup> A detailed list of sub-topic codes can be found in the Appendix in Table 1.



**Figure 5.11: Proportion of Attention: Macroeconomics**

Sub-topic analysis of the macroeconomics policy code shows the Howard government's level of attention to be lower than all others in five of the nine sub-topics: general domestic macroeconomic issues; inflation and interest rates; monetary; national budget and debt levels; and industrial policy. While it may be expected that a Howard government would be different in the area of macroeconomics, it would not be anticipated that its attention levels would be the lowest of any government analysed here. Howard himself positioned macroeconomics as the fundamental issue necessary for successful government, arguing that without these issues correctly implemented, government encounters difficulty implementing much of its agenda. The literature also suggests that Howard privileged this policy issue over social issues.

The sub-topic code 'general domestic macroeconomic issues' includes issues such as economic plans; economic conditions and issues; economic growth and outlook; state of economy; and general economic policy. Of all governments researched here, Keating's paid most attention to this sub-topic, followed by Hawke with Howard devoting the lowest level of attention.

The sub-topic code 'inflation, prices and interest rates' includes issues such as inflation control and reduction; anti-inflation programmes; consumer price index; cost of living; and interest rates. Hawke's government paid most attention to this policy area and Howard demonstrating the lowest level of attention.

The 'monetary supply, central bank' sub-topic code includes issues such as monetary policy; credit availability; national savings; relationship between fiscal and monetary policies; and treasury bonds. The Hawke government paid most attention to this policy area. The Howard government devotes a lower proportion of its attention to this policy area than any of the Labor governments analysed here.

The 'national budget and debt' sub-topic code includes issues such as government debt and deficit; budget surplus; government spending reviews; public expenditure and borrowing; estimates; and fiscal stability. The Keating government paid the most attention to this policy area, followed by Hawke, with the Howard government paying the least attention. Howard's focus on the budget and debt levels was similar to other governments in his early years in office; however, as his terms continued, this focus decreased. This may be explained by the Howard government's restoration of the budget to surplus and the focus of the other governments on their deficits and measures to manage them. The focus on this sub-topic area is in inverse proportion to the level of budget debt carried by the government.

There is an increase in the proportion of attention in this sub-topic code in 2009 under the Rudd government as a result of the Economy Security Strategy that involved AUD\$10 billion of cash handouts and an infrastructure spending programme. From a projected surplus of 1.8% of GDP, the Rudd government's first budget moved to a 2.7% deficit, which constituted an AUD\$53 billion reversal.<sup>346</sup>

The sub-topic code 'industrial policy' includes issues such as manufacturing strategy; assistance to specific industries; industrial productivity; industry commissions and authorities; privatisation; public ownership of industry; and commission on productivity. The Howard government paid the least attention to this sub-topic area, with Keating paying the most attention. Attention levels to this area drop under the Howard government, and do not rise to the pre-Howard levels again under the Rudd or Gillard governments.

The sub-topic code 'price control and stabilisation' includes issues such as economic stabilisation programme; wage-price control and freezes; and prices and incomes accord. Only one government was active in its attention levels in this area: the Hawke government due to the wage and price accord. No other governments had any activity in this area.

The Howard government's attention to the sub-topic code of taxation is higher than that of the Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments but lower than that of the Hawke government. The Howard government's key areas of activity are the introduction of the GST in 1999–2000, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

Macroeconomics is the policy area that receives the highest proportion of government attention under every government considered here. Unsurprisingly, macroeconomic issues receive the highest proportion of attention in budget speeches and a substantially smaller proportion of attention in the Acts of Parliament and Governor General speeches. A significant finding of the

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<sup>346</sup> A. Fenna, 'The Return of Keynesianism in Australia: The Rudd Government and the Lessons of Recessions Past', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2010, p. 362.

macroeconomics data analysis is that the Howard government was the only government to choose to prioritise other policy areas over macroeconomics in budget speeches. This occurred on only three occasions in budget speeches from 1983 to 2011, and all of these instances were under the Howard government. In 1999, the Howard government paid a higher proportion of attention to health; in 2002, ‘labour, employment and immigration’ was the issue that received the highest proportion of attention; and in 2004, social welfare received the highest proportion of attention. By its final term in office, the Howard government was one of only a few governments worldwide with budget surpluses and no net government debt. This goes some way to explaining why the Howard government’s policy agenda gave proportionately less attention to this policy issue than the Labor governments considered here.

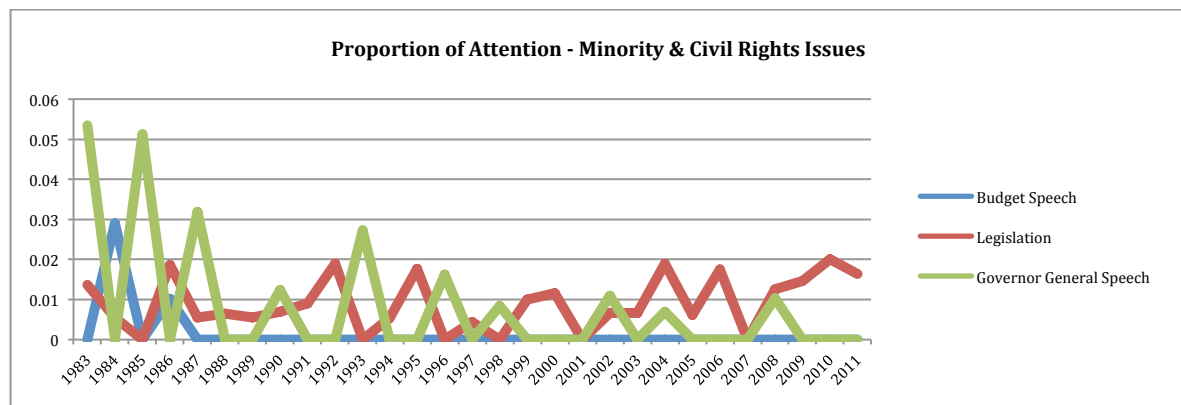
The Rudd government, elected at the end of 2007, came to office with the economy in its sixteenth year of growth. As such, many commentators consider that its main economic challenge was to balance the delivery of its election commitments without driving inflation.<sup>347</sup> However, within only a few months of taking office, the global financial crisis and global recession became realities around the world, and this is reflected in the rising levels of attention macroeconomic policy received at this time.

## 5.8 Civil Rights and Minority Rights Issues

This is not a policy issue that is expected to be high on the Howard government’s priorities. As is evident in Figure 5.12, the proportion of attention paid to this policy issue in budget speeches is very low for all the governments considered. Hawke devoted 0.4% of his attention, with Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard allocating no attention at all in their budget speeches to this issue. For the Acts of Parliament, this topic received a higher proportion of attention than it did in budget speeches but levels remain low. Of the 4,893 pieces of legislation coded here, only 45, or less than 1%, of the Acts of Parliament were in this policy code, the lowest number of any of the 19 policy codes. The major pieces of legislation introduced in this policy area by the Hawke government included the *Racial Discrimination Amendment Act 1983* and *Freedom of Information Amendment Act 1983* in 1983, the *Sex Discrimination Act* in 1984, *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment for Women Act) 1986* in 1986, the *Privacy Act 1988* in 1988. The Keating government introduced the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* in 1992, the *Human Rights Sexual Conduct Act 1994* in 1994 and the *Racial Hatred Act 1995* in 1995.

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid., pp. 353–369.



**Figure 5.12: Proportion of Attention: Minority & Civil Rights Issues**

The Howard government has the lowest levels of attention here but there is no significant difference between the Howard and Labor governments here, with all of them devoting little of their agenda to these issues. The Rudd/Gillard governments passed the *Same-Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws—Superannuation) Act 2008* in 2008 and disability discrimination and other human-rights legislation amendments in 2009, as well as the *Sex and Age Discrimination Legislation Amendment Act 2011* in 2011.

Governor General speeches demonstrate a greater allocation of attention to this policy area than budget speeches and Acts of Parliament, with Hawke’s mean proportion of attention at 3.7%, Keating’s at 2.7%, Howard’s at 1% and Rudd/Gillard’s at 1%. Hawke pays a greater portion of his attention in the Governor General speeches to civil rights issues, followed by Keating, while Howard and the Rudd/Gillard governments allocate similarly low levels of attention.

The highest proportion of any government’s attention to civil and minority rights issues was in the Hawke government’s first Governor General speech in 1983, devoting 5% of its attention to this policy issue. In addition, the trend over time is downwards, with subsequent governments according it lower priority in their agendas.

The last budget speech to devote any attention to this policy area was in 1986 under Hawke, but from that time on, no government allocated any attention in their budget speeches to this topic. The Howard government showed no difference in attention levels to this policy area than the Labor governments. This policy area consistently experiences low levels of attention in Governor General speeches, budget speeches and sees very few pieces of legislation passed, not only by the Howard government but by all governments in the period 1983–2011.

## 5.9 Health

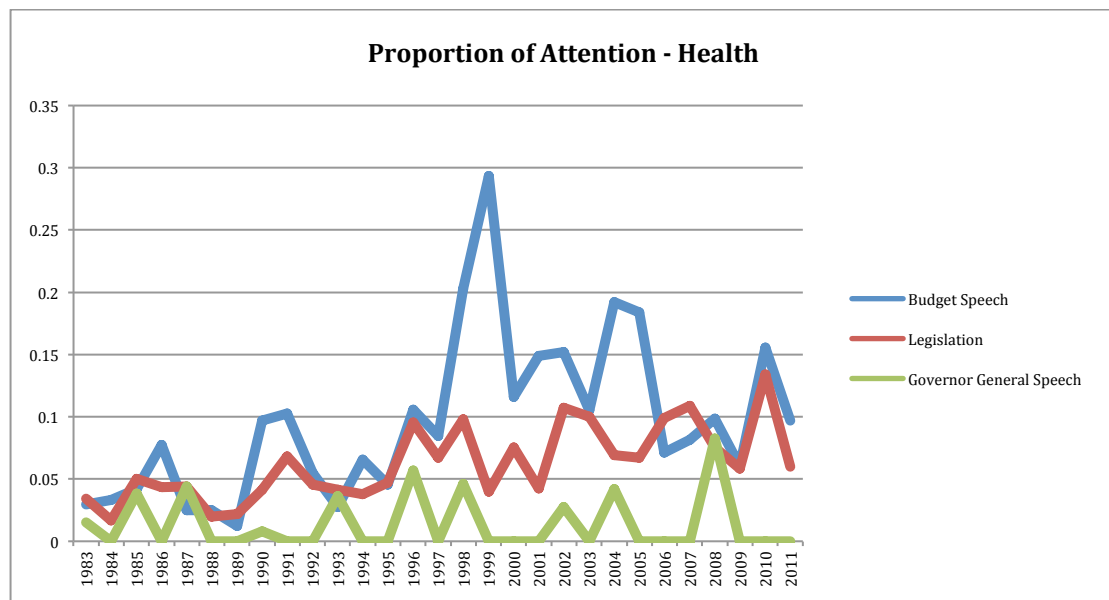
Health policy has received a high proportion of governments’ attention over time, which is accompanied by a large proportion of government spending each year. It is reasonable to expect that the proportion of attention to this policy area will rise due to an increasing focus driven by the

ageing of the Australian population and the accompanying medical issues. A trend line of incremental advances is expected here. However, given the introduction of Medicare by the Hawke government, it is reasonable to expect that Keating may have focused less on this issue than Hawke but that over time attention on this area would increase. This expectation is supported by the results of the analysis.

Figure 5.12 below demonstrates that health is the only policy area that experiences statistically significant differences in more than one measure. It sees the Howard government different its proportion of attention paid in both budget speeches and in Acts of Parliament. Health is one of only four policy areas in budget speeches where the difference between the Howard government and the Labor governments is statistically significant:  $H(3) = 14.61$ ,  $p = .002$ . Howard's attention to health is significantly more than both Hawke ( $U = 9$ ,  $r = -.67$ ) and Keating ( $U = .5$ ,  $r = -.69$ ). However, there were no significant differences between Howard and Rudd/Gillard ( $U = 7$ ,  $r = -.39$ ). Acts of Parliament see Howard focusing on health significantly more than Hawke ( $U = 11$ ,  $r = -.66$ ) and Keating ( $U = 7.5$ ,  $r = -.57$ ), with the Hawke government allocating 3.7% of its attention to this issue, Keating 4.3%, Howard 8%, and Rudd/Gillard 8.2%.

Health sees consistent proportions of attention allocated to it under Hawke and Keating in their budget speeches, Acts of Parliament and Governor General speeches. Hawke's budget speeches demonstrate an attention level of 4.9%, while Keating is at 4.8%. Hawke's attention to health in Acts of Parliament is 3.7%, while Keating's is 4.3%. Governor General speeches for Hawke demonstrate attention levels of 2.6%, and 3.6% for Keating. An increase in attention to this area occurs under Howard, with health receiving 14.4% of Howard's attention in budget speeches and 8% (double that of Hawke and almost double Keating's proportion of attention to this area in Acts of Parliament). Howard's Governor General speeches pay 4.3% of attention to health, which is quite similar to Hawke and Keating. The Rudd/Gillard government pay substantially more attention to health in their budget speeches than both Hawke and Keating, although less than Howard, at 10.2%. They pay a similar proportion of attention to health as Howard in Acts of Parliament, while Rudd's 2008 Governor General speech demonstrate an attention level more than double that of Howard's at 8.2%.

The greatest proportion of attention paid to health during this period (see Figure 5.12) was the Howard government's 1999 budget speech, where it was paid 29.3% of the attention.



**Figure 5.13: Proportion of Attention: Health**

In budget speeches and Acts of Parliament, health receives a higher proportion of the Howard government's agenda than it does with the Labor governments. Health receives a similar proportion of attention in Governor General speeches under Howard as the other governments. The difference in the Acts of Parliament is not as marked as the difference in the budget speeches. As Figure 5.12 demonstrates, in 1999, health receives a particularly high proportion of attention from the Howard government. This is due to the introduction of private-health-insurance rebates (designed to encourage people to take out early and continuous medical cover), a focus on rural health services, the introduction of the National Illicit Drug Strategy, and an increase in funding for health and medical research.

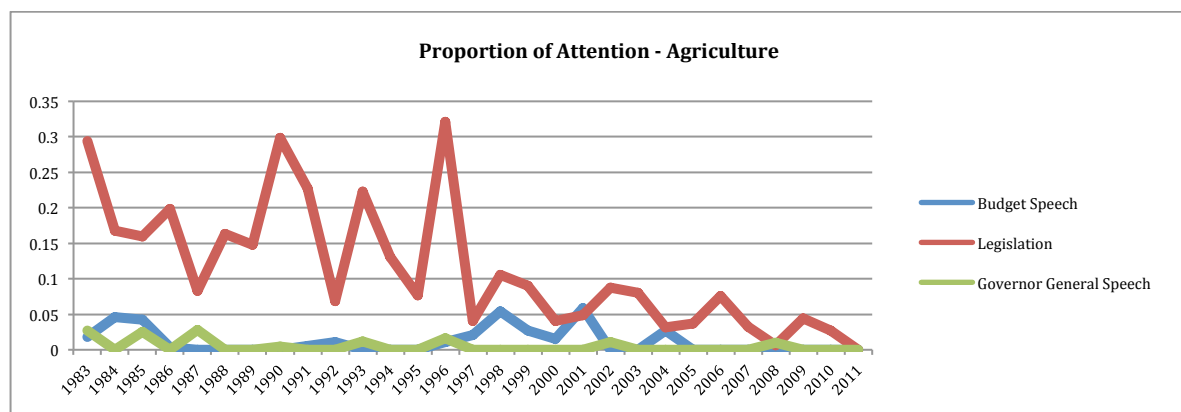
## 5.10 Agriculture

Given that the Howard government was a Coalition government with the National Party, it is reasonable to expect that it would pay more attention to this policy area than the Labor governments. This policy area is one of only five policy areas where a statistically significant difference is evident between the Howard government and the Labor governments. The difference occurs in the Acts of Parliament:  $H(3) = 17.58$ ,  $p = .001$ , with the Hawke government allocating significantly more attention to agriculture than Howard ( $U = 10$ ,  $r = -.67$ ), but with Howard prioritising agriculture significantly more than Rudd/Gillard ( $U = 3$ ,  $r = -.64$ ). That is, the Howard government pays significantly less attention to agriculture than the Hawke government but significantly more attention than the Rudd/Gillard governments. There is no significant difference in budget speeches or Governor General speeches in this policy area.

Agriculture receives low levels of attention in Governor General speeches (Hawke 2.1%, Keating 1.1%, Howard 0.6%, Rudd/Gillard 1%) and budget speeches (Hawke 1.2%, Keating 0.2%,



Howard 1.7%, Rudd/Gillard 0%) from all governments. However, higher levels of attention are paid to this policy area in Acts of Parliament initially under Hawke, but this area trends downwards dramatically over time (Hawke 19.3%, Keating 12.4%, Howard 8.2%, Rudd/Gillard 1.9%). The greatest proportion of attention paid to agriculture was under Howard in the budget speech of 1996, with 32.1% of the attention in Acts of Parliament. After this point, the area received a dramatically lower proportion of attention. However, agriculture did experience a brief period of increasing attention in the budget speech from 1998 (10.5%). The proportion of attention paid to agriculture experienced a sharp decrease after the first year of the Howard government and has continued to receive low levels of attention throughout the Howard government and the Rudd/Gillard government.

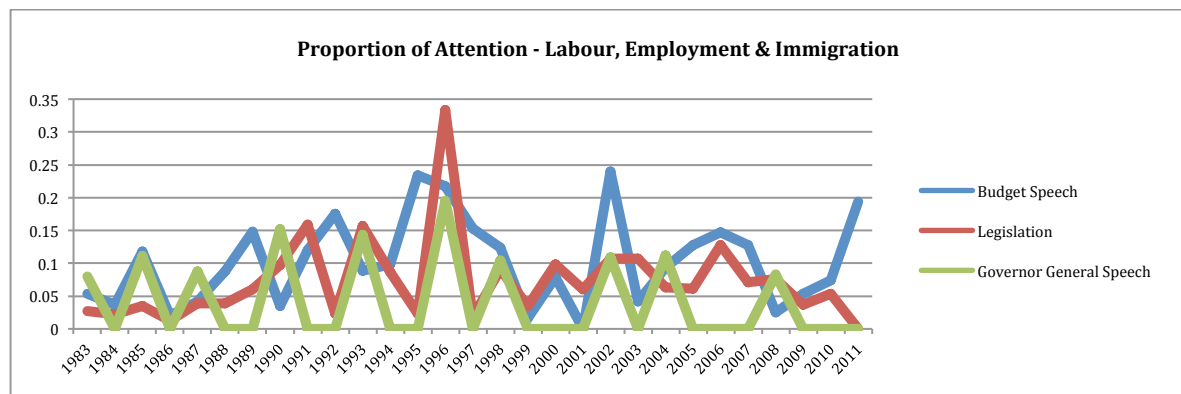


**Figure 5.14: Proportion of Attention: Agriculture**

The Howard government is similar to Labor governments in the attention it paid to agriculture in the Governor General speeches and the budget speeches. However, as mentioned, the Howard government is different in the attention it paid to agriculture in the Acts of Parliament. In this measure, Howard is different from Hawke and Keating, who pay greater proportions of attention to agriculture in this measure than Howard. Howard is also different from Rudd/Gillard in this measure, as they pay lower levels of attention to agriculture than Howard does. While attention to this area dropped sharply under Howard, it did not increase under the Rudd/Gillard government. A less interventionist policy towards agriculture over time is clear here, and is supported by claims in the literature that this has been the approach adopted.

### 5.11 Labour, Employment and Immigration

As seen in Figure 5.15 below, this policy area is paid high levels of attention by every government in the Governor General speeches, budget speeches and Acts of Parliament. This broad policy area includes 11 sub-topic codes with one of the sub-topic codes, 'immigration and refugee issues', having a further five sub-categories. The first eight of the 11 sub-topic codes deal with employment and labour policy.



**Figure 5.15: Proportion of Attention: Labour, Employment & Immigration**

Analysis demonstrates that the labour and employment sub-topic codes reveal similar levels of attention from Hawke and Keating and lower proportions of attention from Howard and Rudd/Gillard. The immigration codes demonstrate that Rudd/Gillard and Howard governments are the most active in this area.

Budget speeches see the Hawke government allocating 7.3% of its attention to this area, with Keating 14.9%, Howard 11.3%, and Rudd/Gillard 8.6%. Acts of Parliament reveal Hawke allocating 5.4%, Keating 7.2%, Howard 9.7% and Rudd/Gillard 4.1% of attention, while in Governor General speeches, Hawke allocates 10.7%, Keating 14.2%, Howard 13% and Rudd/Gillard 8.2%. The greatest proportion of attention to this policy area came with Howard's first year in office in the 1996 in Acts of Parliament. On two occasions, this topic code received over 20% of a government's attention in budget speeches: under Keating in 1995 at 23.4% and under Howard in 2002 at 23.9%. The greatest proportion of attention in a Governor General speech for this policy area was also under Howard in his first year: in 1996, he devoted 19.5% attention to this issue.

The Keating government pays the greatest proportion of attention to this topic in budget speeches, followed by Howard, Rudd/Gillard and then Hawke. Howard sits at the mid-range of attention of all governments in the budget speeches and cannot be considered different to the Labor governments. In Acts of Parliament, Howard pays the greatest proportion of his attention to this area, followed by Keating, Hawke and then Rudd/Gillard. The difference between Howard and Keating is small, but there is a difference between Howard and Hawke and Rudd/Gillard. The Governor General speeches again see Keating paying the greatest proportion of his attention to this area, followed by Howard, then Hawke and Rudd/Gillard

The sub-topics of worker safety and protection; employee relations and labour unions; fair labour standards; youth employment and child labour; and migrant and seasonal workers receive consistently low levels of attention across the period considered here. Therefore, the focus in this section is on the two sub-topic codes that receive the highest proportion of attention in this area:

employee benefits (because it receives the highest proportion of attention of all of the sub-topics in this area), and immigration and refugee issues (due to the highly charged nature of the politics surrounding it). As discussed in the previous chapter, many commentators see the Howard government's approach to immigration and refugee issues as a key area in which Howard was different to the Labor governments.

The sub-topic code of employee benefits encompasses issues such as terms of employment, employee stock ownership plans, worker compensation and tax treatment of employee fringe benefits. However, the topic that accounts for almost every statement or Act of Parliament that has been coded in this category is superannuation.

Keating and Howard pay the largest proportion of attention to this sub-topic code. The largest focus of attention is in budget speeches under the Hawke government in 1989, Keating in 1995, and Howard in 1996, 1997 and 2006. There was also an increase in legislative activity in the early 1990s in this policy area, with the passing of legislation for the introduction of a mandatory superannuation scheme in the form of the Superannuation Guarantee, which required employers to contribute to superannuation on behalf of their employees. The 1995 budget speech saw the highest proportion of attention to this sub-topic code, which is attributable to the Keating government's introduction of employee superannuation contributions and changes to the tax rate for superannuation funds.

The sub-topic code of 'immigration and refugee issues' is a contentious and difficult policy area during this period in Australian politics. Immigration, particularly asylum-seeker policy, has been one of the most fraught and controversial issues in modern Australian politics. As the Howard government's policy initiatives around the processing of asylum-seeker have received a great deal of criticism, it could be expected that his government would be paying a higher proportion of attention to this issue than the Labor governments.

This policy area receives a higher proportion of attention from all governments in budget speeches, with this area receiving the least attention in Governor General speeches. Legislative attention to this policy area peaked in the Howard government's first year in office. Most of the activity in the sub-topic code of immigration and refugee issues comes from Keating and Howard. They are the most active in this policy area, devoting more attention to the area than Hawke and Rudd/Gillard. However, despite high levels of media attention, this is not an area that receives high proportions of government attention, and when attention is focused on this area, it is not sustained. There have been five periods in which attention was paid to this sub-topic area: 1992 and 1995 under Keating, and 2000, 2002 and 2007 under Howard and in 2011 under Gillard.

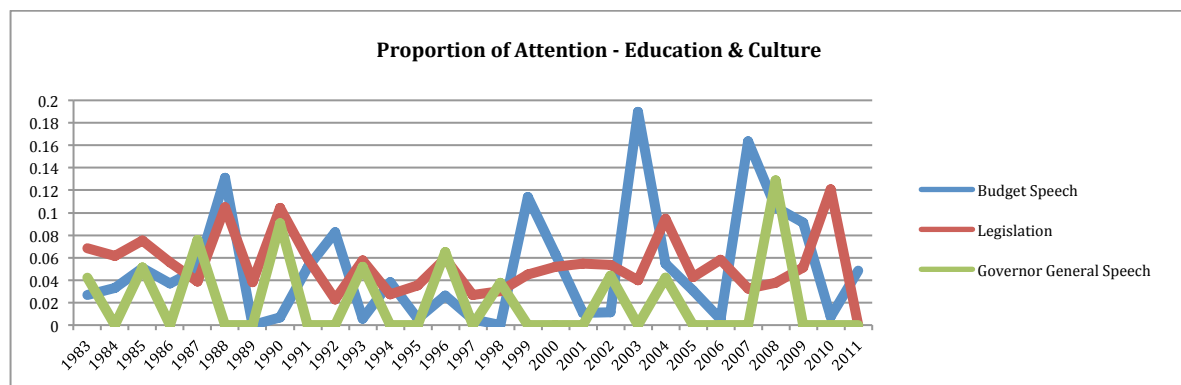
The highest proportion of attention this sub-topic receives is under Keating in 1992, with the introduction of the *Migration Reform Act*, the creation of a Refugee Review Tribunal and the

*Australian Citizenship Amendment Act*. This was in response to a ‘second wave’ of boat arrivals from Cambodia and China that began in 1989. The detention system was based on the distinction between authorised and unauthorised arrivals. The Keating government established the system and the Howard government continued with the policy after it was elected. Despite many of the claims in the literature, there is an entrenched and bipartisan approach to border-protection policy evidenced here.

Attention peaked again Howard’s 2002 budget, with increased expenditure on border protection, compensation to Nauru and Papua New Guinea to host processing centres for people arriving by boat, and construction of a detention centre on Christmas Island. There was also increased funding for contributions to the UNHCR to deter transit countries from sending people to Australia, with the aim of slowing down unauthorised arrivals by sea. The increased attention in 2007 under Howard was due to legislation that included the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* that introduced citizenship testing and the *Border Security Act*.

## 5.12 Education and Culture

This policy area receives relatively high levels of attention from all governments, as seen in Figure 5.16 below.



**Figure 5.16: Proportion of Attention: Education and Culture**

It experiences sudden increases in attention before dropping off for a short period, only to receive another increase in attention. Education for both school and higher education is a policy area that Labor governments claim as a strength. It is expected that the Howard government would pay less attention to this policy area than other governments analysed here. It is also reasonable to expect that this would be a policy area in which the Rudd/Gillard government would differ from the Howard government. In the 2007 election campaign, Rudd differentiated himself from Howard in his approach to education. He highlighted that the future of Australian society depended on the quality of its education system, coming to power with a central promise an ‘education revolution’. Such a revolution is not evident in the proportions of attention paid to this policy area.

This policy area receives bursts of attention, which then drops in both budget speeches and Governor General speeches, while the proportion of attention it receives in Acts of Parliament remains more constant. It is important to highlight that this topic code is comprised of 10 sub-codes. These include a general category; higher education; primary and secondary education; education of underprivileged students; vocational education; special education; educational excellence; arts and humanities (culture); research and development; and other.

The elementary and secondary education sub-topic code receives the most attention, which may be surprising considering that school education is the constitutional responsibility of the states. However, the Commonwealth began funding school education in 1963, from which point, the education policy-making dynamic changed.<sup>348</sup>

The highest proportion of attention paid to this area is by the Howard government in 2003, with almost 19% of the budget speech; this is due predominately to reforms in the university sector. Four other peaks of attention occur in the education topic code. The first is with the Hawke government's 1988 budget speech and the introduction of HECS through which students became responsible for meeting some of the costs of their university education. The second peak occurs with the Howard government's 1999 budget speech and its emphasis on literacy and numeracy funding, and a change in the funding arrangements of non-government schools. The third increase occurs in Howard's 2007 budget speech; this is due to the establishment of the HEEF from the Future Fund to generate earnings for capital works and research facilities in higher education institutions; the establishment of three new technical colleges; additional funding for apprenticeships; and a focus on literacy and numeracy programmes in primary schools and a voucher system for parents of children who require additional educational support. The final increase in the proportion of attention to education is from the Rudd/Gillard government's 2008 budget speech that dealt with funding for computers for students in Years 9 to 12, and increasing funding levels for trade training.

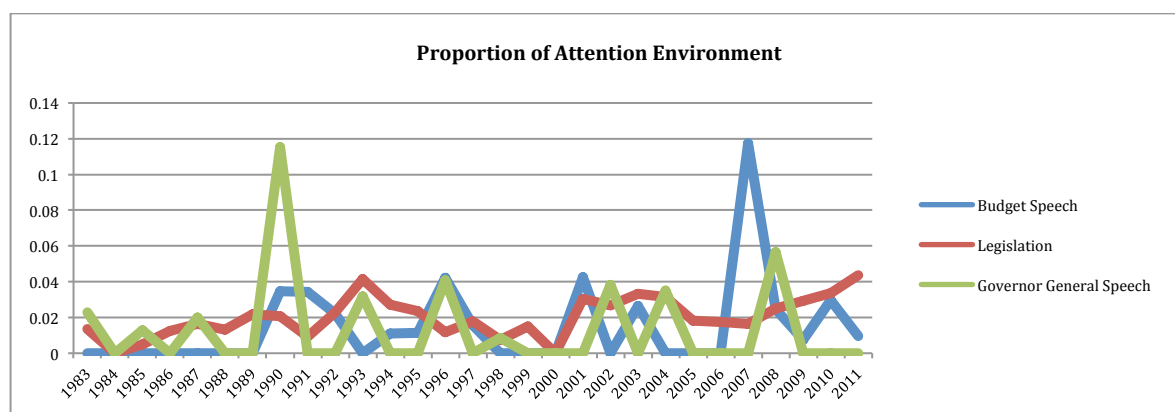
### **5.13 Environment**

Despite the high levels of attention this policy issue receives in the media, governments consistently allocate relatively low proportions of attention to it. In Acts of Parliament, it is one of only three policy issues (civil rights and community development are the other two) that had fewer than 100 pieces of legislation enacted during the period 1983–2011. Only 97 of the 4,893 pieces of legislation passed, or less than 2%, pertain to this area, despite its high media focus.

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<sup>348</sup> Piper.

There are two key instances of major shifts in proportion of attention in this area, as seen clearly in Figure 5.17 below: the Hawke government's 1990 Governor General speech with the establishment of the Commonwealth Environment Protection Agency and the Howard government's 2007 budget speech. Howard's budget speech in 2007 paid the highest proportion of attention to this policy area than any other government analysed here. This is due to the introduction of a range of measures such as the National Heritage Trust extension, climate-change initiatives (including increased research funding to the CSIRO), the launch of the Environment Stewardship Programme, as well as funding for the provision of water tanks in schools and community organisations. It is important to understand that Australia was experiencing a major (and worsening) drought at this time. While it cannot be argued that the environment was a major policy focus for the Howard government in its first three terms, there is an increased amount of attention in its final term in office, denoting a greater shift in attention than with the change of government on the election of the Rudd/Gillard government.



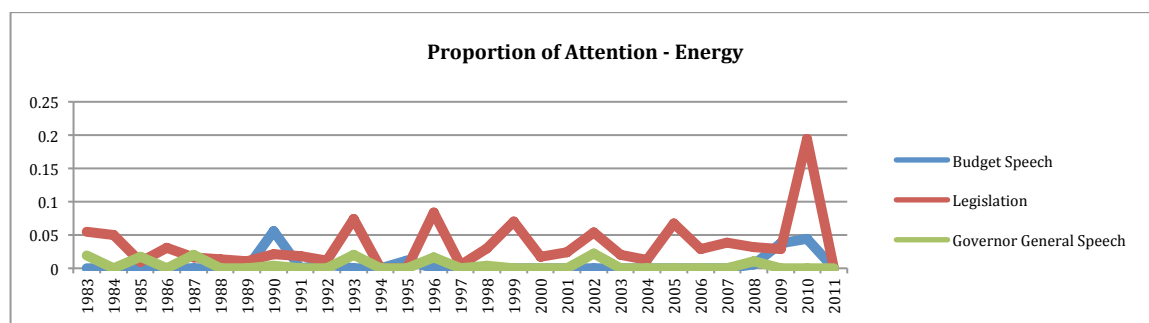
**Figure 5.17: Proportion of Attention: Environment**

## 5.14 Energy

Australia is a high per-capita energy user<sup>349</sup> and as such, it is reasonable to expect that energy policy would receive a significant proportion of attention in the policy agenda of the governments analysed here. This is not the case, as evidenced in Figure 5.13. This policy area receives low levels of attention from all governments in Governor General speeches and budget speeches. Despite this, it is one of only four policy areas in budget speeches where there is a statistically significant difference across governments:  $H(3) = 19.76$ ,  $p < .001$ , such that Rudd/Gillard devote significantly more attention to energy than Howard ( $U = .00$ ,  $r = -.96$ ), and Keating significantly more than Howard ( $U = 12$ ,  $r = .69$ ). However, there were no significant

<sup>349</sup> For a detailed overview of Australia's energy use and export, see J. Falk and D. Settle, 'Australia: Approaching an Energy Crossroads', *Energy Policy*, vol. 39, no. 11, 2011, pp. 6804–6813.

differences between Howard and Hawke ( $U = 48, r = 0$ ). That is, the Keating government and the Rudd/Gillard government both pay energy policy issues significantly more attention than Howard does in budget speeches.



**Figure 5.18: Proportion of Attention: Energy**

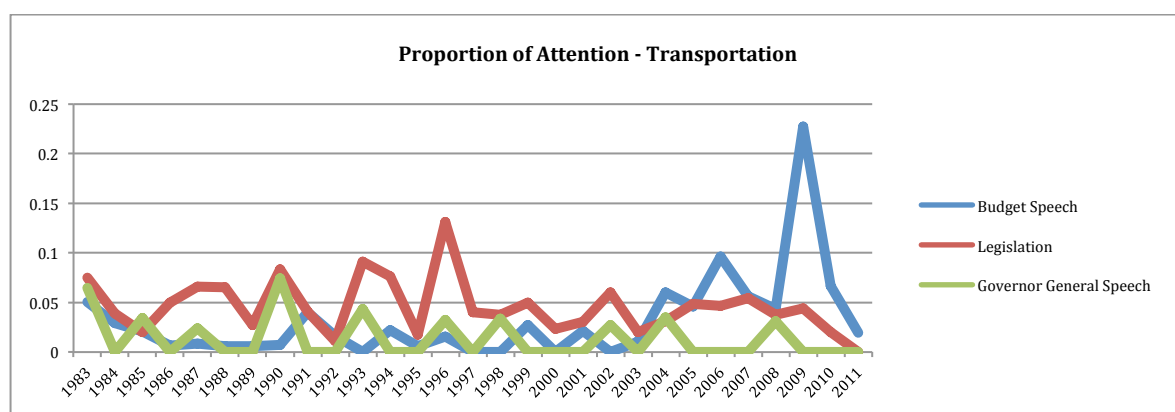
The most striking point about the analysis of this policy area is the higher proportion of attention in the legislative agenda that energy received under the Rudd/Gillard government. The renewable-energy and clean-energy initiatives in 2010 account for the increased attention where it received 19.4% of the government's legislation agenda. This is substantially higher than its previous high point of 8.3% in the Howard government's agenda in 1996.

The clean-energy legislation followed an unsuccessful attempt by the government under Rudd to pass the Emissions Trading Scheme through Parliament. Prior to the United Nations climate-change summit in Copenhagen, the then Prime Minister Rudd said that it would be 'an act of absolute political cowardice, an absolute failure of leadership not to act on climate change until other nations had done so', and attempted to pass the legislation in Parliament.<sup>350</sup> Following its defeat and the unsuccessful Copenhagen conference, the scheme was deferred. Rudd's failure to implement this policy is considered by many commentators as one of the factors that contributed to a loss of support for his leadership and his replacement by Gillard.

### 5.15 Transportation

Transportation is typically seen as a responsibility of the states and is a policy area that generally receives low proportions of attention from federal governments. As seen in the figure below, this policy area received increasing proportions of attention in budget speeches under the Howard government from 2004, rising again in 2006 under Howard, before experiencing a sharp increase in attention with the Rudd/Gillard government in 2009. Legislative activity peaked in 1996 under Howard and then trended downwards until 2011. The proportion of attention given to transport in Governor General speeches has been consistently low across all governments.

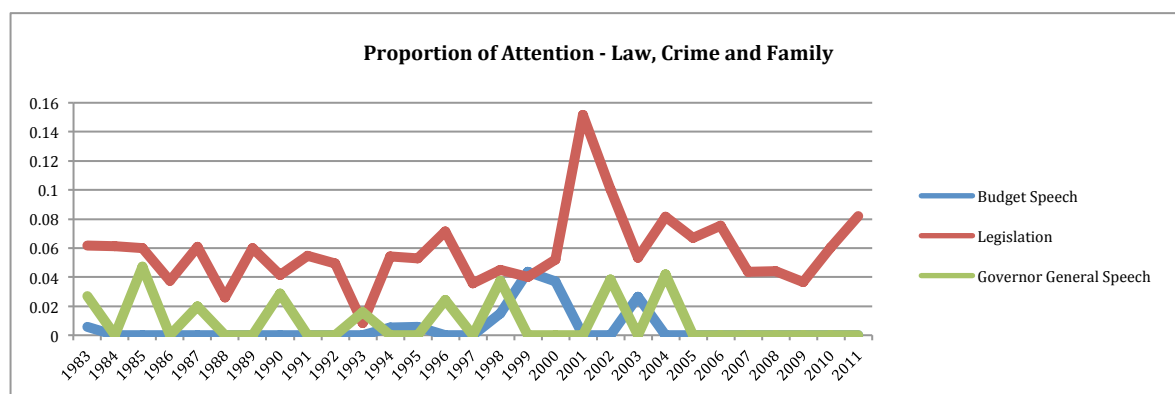
<sup>350</sup> The 7.30 Report, ABC, 28 April 2010 (accessed 25 April 2012).



**Figure 5.19: Proportion of Attention: Transportation**

## 5.16 Law, Crime and Family

Law, crime and family issues routinely receive relatively low proportions of attention by all governments considered here. As seen in Figure 5.20 below, the proportion of attention in Acts of Parliament is distinctly higher across all governments than in budget speeches or Governor General speeches. The sharpest increase in proportion of attention for this issue came in Acts of Parliament in 2001 under the Howard government due to a range of measures introduced in response to the 9/11 attacks.



**Figure 5.20: Proportion of Attention: Law, Crime and Family**

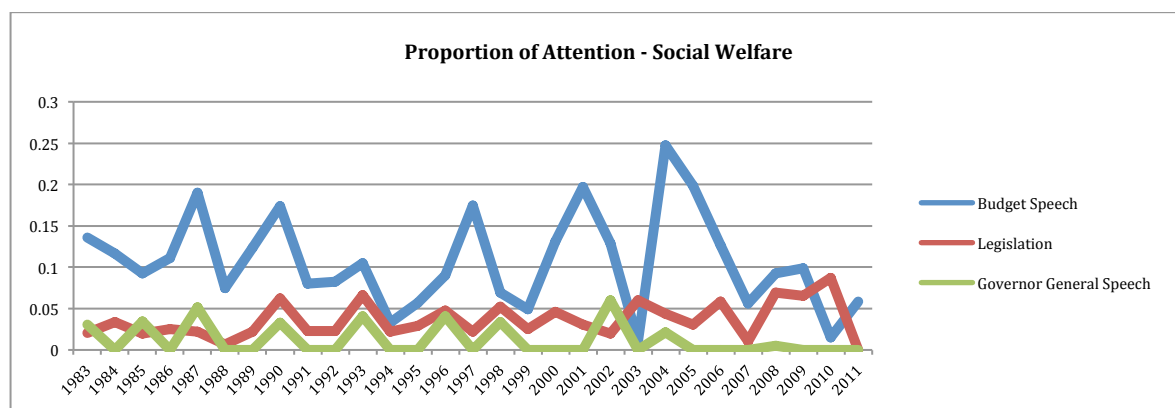
## 5.17 Social Welfare

Given Labor's policy platforms and history, it is reasonable to expect that this policy area would receive a greater amount of focus from Labor governments than from the Howard government. Figure 5.21 below, shows that Social-welfare issues receive high proportions of attention in budget speeches from all governments analysed here but receive relatively low proportions of attention in Governor General speeches and Acts of Parliament. This is not unexpected given that spending in this area comprises just over 40% of budget expenditure.<sup>351</sup>

<sup>351</sup> Garnett and Lewis, p. 138.



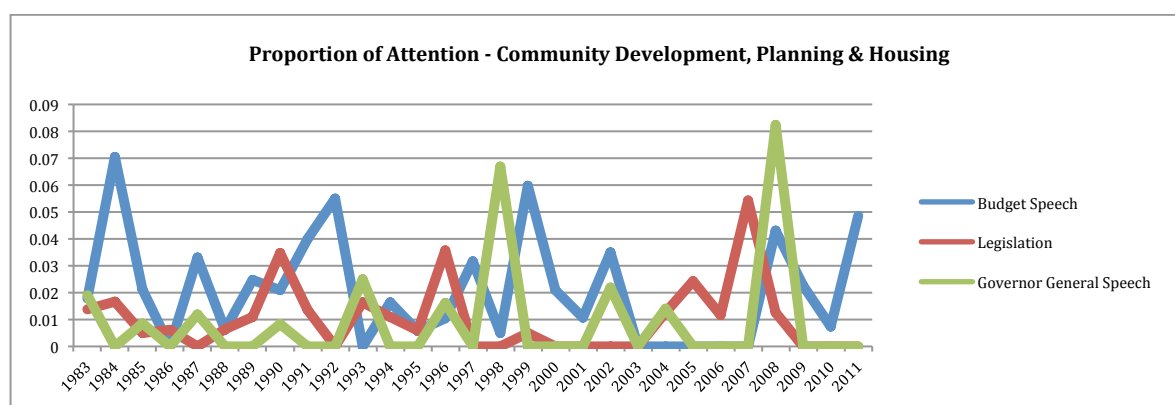
Surprisingly, the highest proportion of attention paid to this topic was under the Howard government in 2004, constituting the most attention paid to this topic by any government analysed here.



**Figure 5.21: Proportion of Attention: Social Welfare**

### 5.18 Community Development

Figure 5.22 below shows Community Development to be a policy area that receives consistently very low proportions of attention from all governments in budget speeches, Governor General speeches and Acts of Parliament. In Acts of Parliament, this policy area is one with the fewest pieces of legislation passed, with only 51 of the 4,893 (just over 1%). It experiences an increase in proportion of attention from the Rudd/Gillard government in the Governor General speech of 2008, and a corresponding increase in budget measures in 2011.



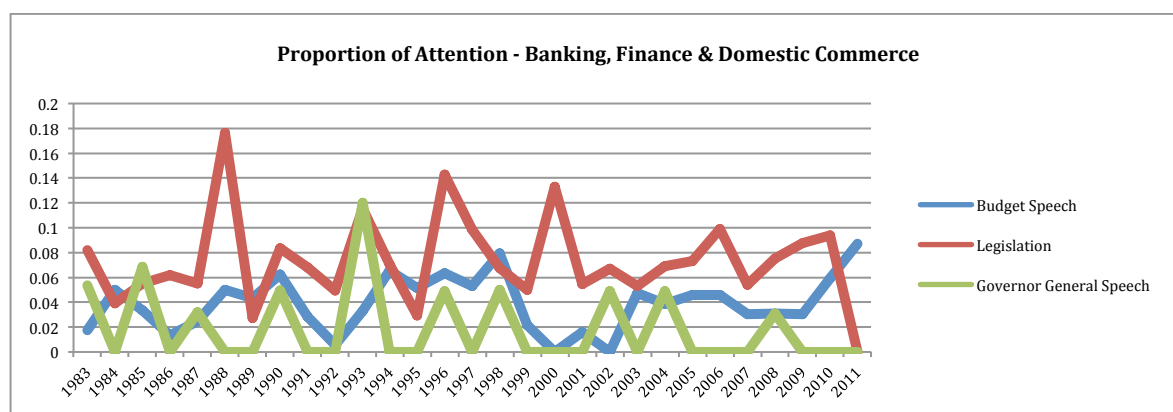
**Figure 5.22: Proportion of Attention: Community Development, Planning and Housing**

### 5.19 Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce

This topic code incorporates 14 sub-topic codes including areas such as banking system and financial system regulation; securities and commodities regulation; consumer finance; mortgages and credit cards; insurance regulation; debt and bankruptcy; corporate mergers; small-business issues; copyrights and patents; domestic disaster relief; tourism; consumer safety and consumer fraud and sports; leisure; and gambling regulation. Given that small business has historically been

seen as a strong constituency of the Coalition, it is reasonable to expect that the Howard government would demonstrate higher levels of attention in this policy area than Labor governments. However, it receives consistent proportions of attention in all the measures of analysis (budget speeches, Governor General speeches and Acts of Parliament) from all governments. The greatest proportion of attention is in the Acts of Parliament, and lower levels of attention are paid to this policy area in the Governor General speeches than other area.

There are number of occasions that can be identified in Figure 5.23 below, where increased attention occurs for this area. The first of which occurs in 1989 under the Hawke government, which is attributable to an amendment to the *Banking Act* which removed the distinction between trading and savings banks, providing them with an opportunity to engage in commercial bank business and offer cheque accounts to their customers. A second increase in the attention it receives occurs in 1993 under Keating in response to the collapse of the State Bank of Victoria, the State Bank of South Australia and the Pyramid Building Society, and the subsequent creation of uniform national regulation for the non-bank institutions and the formation of the Australian Financial Institutions Commission.<sup>352</sup> There are three key moments of increased attention under the Howard government in 1998, 2001 and 2007. As detailed in the previous chapter, the attention paid to this policy area in 1998 under Howard was due to the implementation of the Wallis Committee of Inquiry recommendation for the establishment of APRA.<sup>353</sup> The attention paid to this area in 2001 resulted from the introduction of the *Financial Services Reform Act*, another recommendation from the Wallis Review,<sup>354</sup> and the introduction of the *Corporations Act*.



<sup>352</sup> Its responsibility was to regulate the prudential standards of credit unions and building societies overseeing liquidity and capital adequacy requirements and risk management procedures. For further details, see D. Thomson and M. Abbott, 'Banking Regulation and Market Forces in Australia', *International Review of Financial Analysis*, vol. 10, 2001, p. 82.

<sup>353</sup> APRA became the single regulator responsible for overseeing the prudential regulation of banks, building societies, credit unions and all other financial institutions.

<sup>354</sup> The Act provided for the uniform regulation of all financial products, service providers and markets, a single licensing framework to replace various legal regimes and minimum standards of conduct and disclosure for financial service providers.

### Figure 5.23: Proportion of Attention: Banking, Finance & Domestic Commerce

Increases in attention in 2009 and 2010 under Rudd/Gillard are due to a range of measures for depreciation for small business, the *National Consumer Credit Protection Act*,<sup>355</sup> and changes to financial-sector legislation to strengthen APRA's ability to investigate and detect risk in institutions and the financial system to promote stability in the financial system. Much of this attention was in response to the global financial crisis, and an attempt to ensure the strength of the Australian financial sector in a time of heightened global and regulatory risk.

#### 5.20 Defence

Defence is a policy issue that receives relatively low levels of attention over time, with the Howard government allocating the highest proportion of attention to defence of any of the governments analysed here. Defence receives no attention in budget speeches from 1988 until 2000, where under the Howard government, there is an observable increase in the proportion of attention paid to defence matters.

Three increases can be seen in Figure 5.24 below, in the proportion of attention paid to defence under the Howard government, particularly in 2000 and 2003, and again in 2006. This is as a result of a range of factors, including increased military activity in the peace-keeping work in East Timor, the Solomon Islands, and involvement in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq during this period.

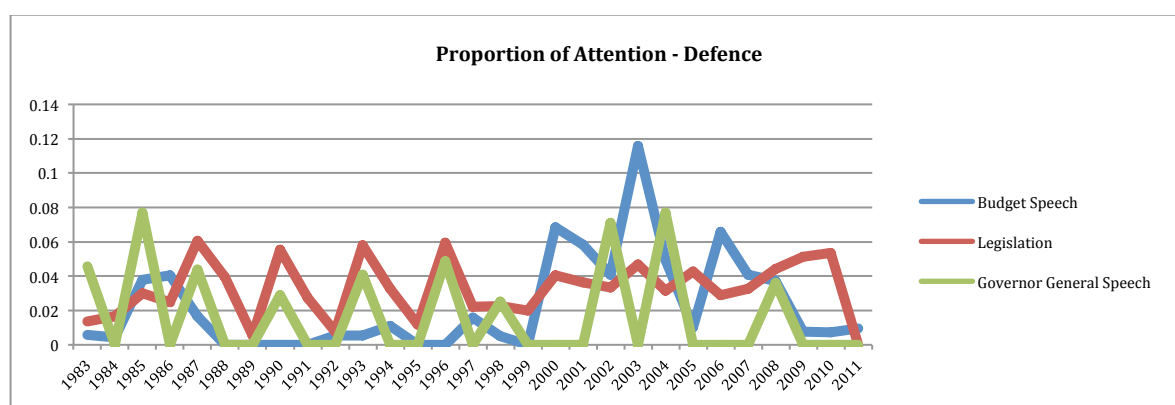


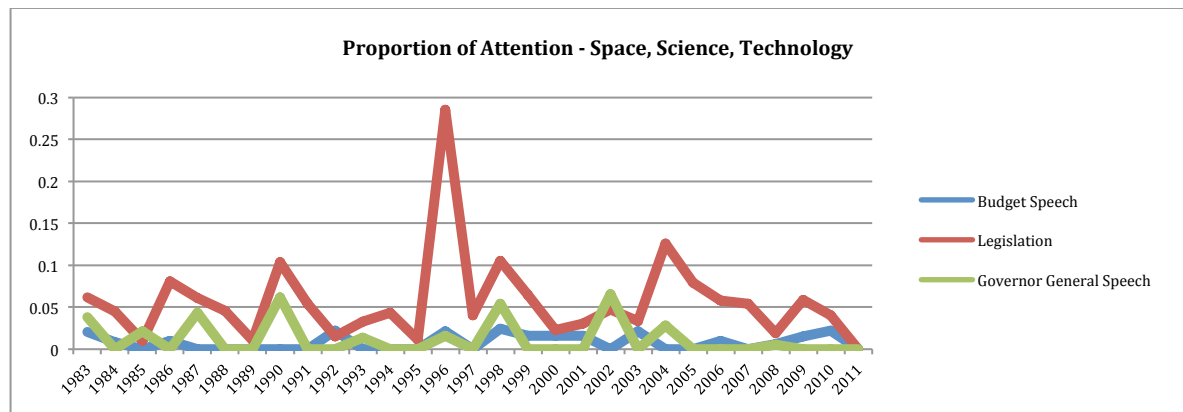
Figure 5.24: Proportion of Attention: Defence

#### 5.21 Space, Science and Technology

This policy area receives consistently low proportions of government attention across the period analysed here, evidenced in Figure 5.25 below. All governments choose to allocate a very

<sup>355</sup> The National Consumer Credit Protection Act regulates responsible lending and the licensing of credit providers.

small part of their policy agenda to this topic code, with the exception of the Howard government for a brief period in 1996 with legislation to sell part of Telstra.



**Figure 5.25: Proportion of Attention: Space, Science and Technology**

## 5.22 Foreign Trade

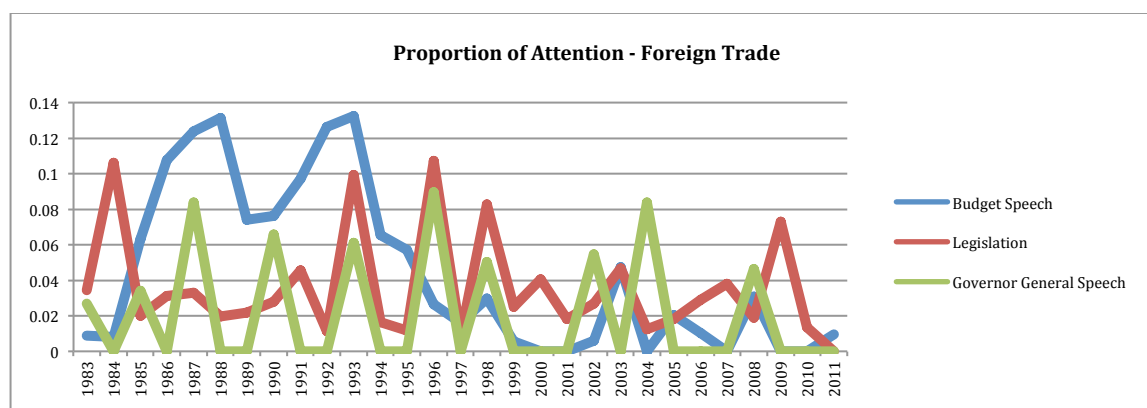
Foreign Trade, as demonstrated in Figure 5.26, is a policy area that historically reveals a clear distinction between Labor and Liberal governments, with Labor governments promoting multilateral approaches and Liberal governments favouring bilateralism. It is one of only four policy areas in which significant differences exist between governments in budget speeches:  $H(3) = 15.97, p = .001$ . Hawke devotes significantly more attention to foreign trade than Howard ( $U = 10, r = -.66$ ), as did Keating ( $U = .00, r = -.77$ ). No significant differences existed between Howard and Rudd/Gillard ( $U = 13.5, r = -.17$ ). The levels of attention to foreign trade have decreased significantly over time, particularly in the budget speeches since the early 1990s under the Hawke and Keating governments.

Despite Rudd's promises of a new approach to Australian trade policy when he came to office in 2007, there was no significant difference in this analysis between Howard and the Rudd/Gillard government in the attention level to this area in budget speeches. Rudd argued that the Howard government's privileging of bilateralism over multilateralism would change, with Simon Crean's first speech as Trade Minister asserting that global trade reform and World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round negotiations were the Rudd government's 'number one priority' in trade policy.<sup>356</sup>

All governments devoted similar proportions of their Governor General speech and their Acts of Parliament to this policy code. The Hawke and Keating governments devoted a greater

<sup>356</sup> Cited in A. Capling, 'Australia's Trade Policy Dilemmas', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 62, vol. 2, 2008, p. 232.

proportion of their budget speech to foreign trade than Howard and Rudd/Gillard, but attention dropped dramatically after Keating's 1993 budget speech, and this trend continued over time.

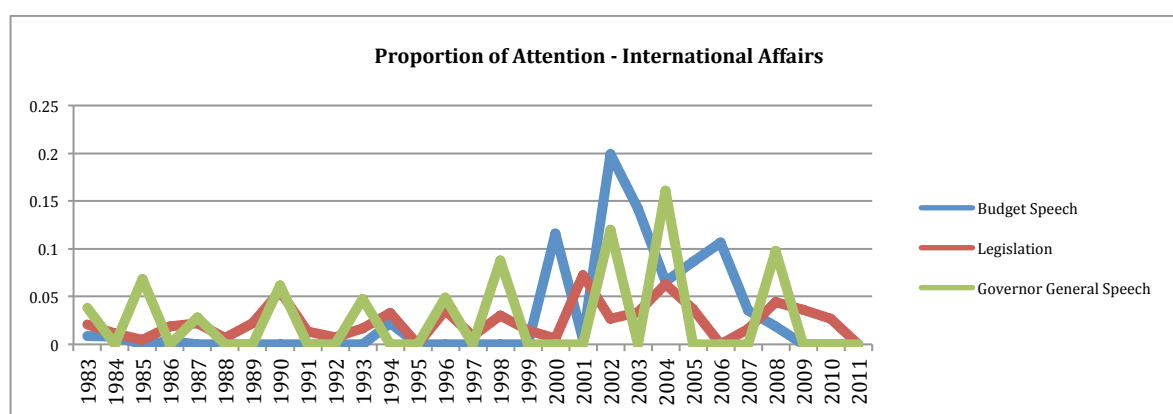


**Figure 5.26: Proportion of Attention: Foreign Trade**

### 5.23 International Affairs and Foreign Aid

Many commentators describe Howard as insular and lacking the grand vision of a Prime Minister such as Keating. As such, it is reasonable to expect that international affairs would occupy less space in a crowded agenda under a Howard-led government than under governments led by Keating or Rudd.

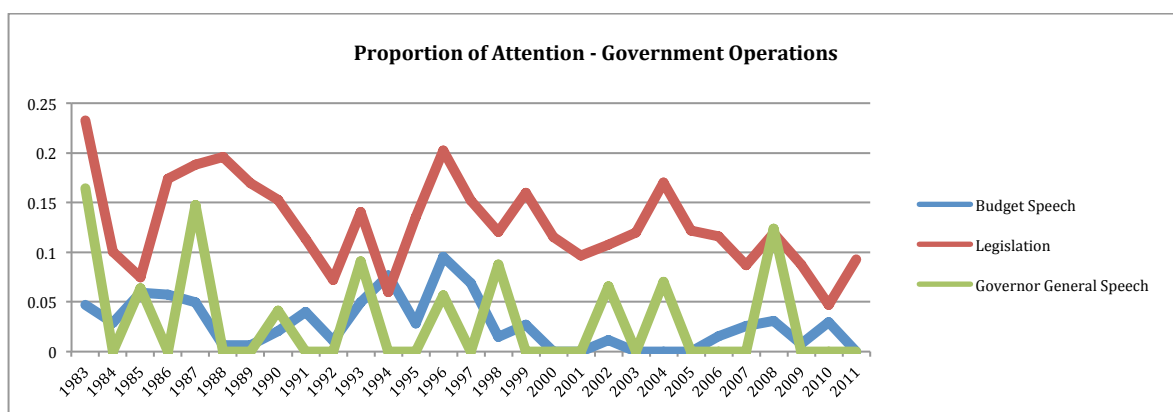
As Figure 5.27 below demonstrates, International affairs and foreign aid had been a stable policy area in the proportion of government attention it received until the early 2000s when it became prioritised at a level that had not previously been seen. It returned to low levels of attention under the Gillard government. The largest increase in attention in any policy area analysed from 1983 to 2011 occurs in this area. The change came under Howard in 2002 after the 2001 9/11 attacks in the United States with a major focus on upgrading national security. In 2003, there was also an increased proportion of attention to this area because of the Bali bombings in which 88 Australians were killed. This increased attention in this policy area is explained by the effect of external events rather than an internally driven policy agenda. The increased attention in the 2005 Governor General speech is due to the commitment of assistance, aid and a rebuilding package of AUD\$1 billion after the 2004 Boxing Day 2004.



**Figure 5.27: Proportion of Attention: International Affairs**

## 5.24 Government Operations

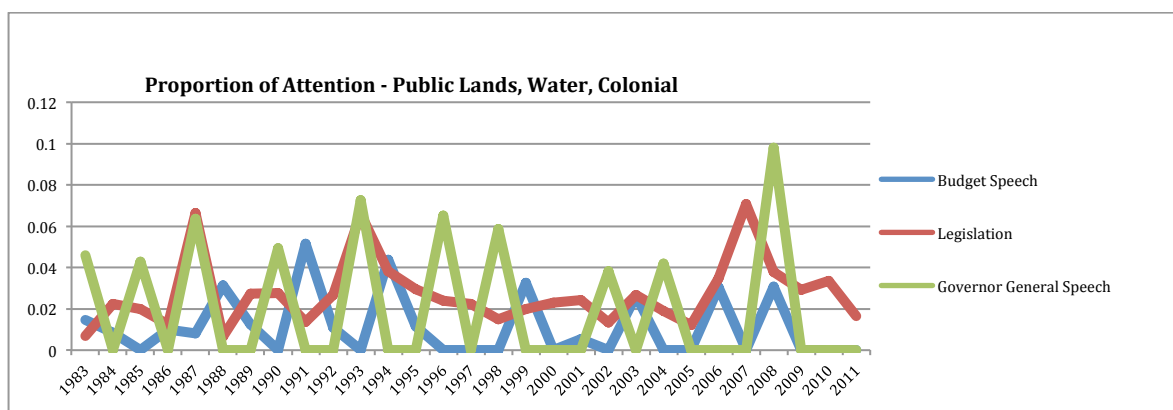
Figure 5.28 below, shows that Government operations receives a greater amount of attention from all governments in Acts of Parliament than it does in either budget speeches or Governor General speeches. Given the emphasis on efficiency and management by the Howard government, it is reasonable to expect that this area would be more important to Howard's agenda than that of the Labor governments. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Howard government implemented a range of measures that shifted government operations to the private sector.



**Figure 5.28: Proportion of Attention: Government Operations**

## 5.25 Public Lands, Water Management, Colonial and Territorial Issues

This policy area includes a diverse group of seven sub-topic codes, including national parks; natural resources; water resources development and research; Australian dependencies and territorial issues; and indigenous affairs. Indigenous affairs has additional sub-topic codes including a general code; land rights; political and legal rights; and standards of living and community wellbeing. The indigenous affairs general category includes budget estimates; requests and appropriations for indigenous affairs; economic aid to indigenous populations; and law enforcement in indigenous communities. All these sub-topic codes are detailed in Appendix 1. The broad topic code is pictured below in Figure 5.29.



### Figure 5.29: Proportion of Attention: Public Lands, Water & Colonial Issues

The greatest amount of attention in this general sub-topic occurs under the Hawke government in 1991, with the government's funding for the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The other increase in the proportion of attention in this sub-topic code occurs under the Howard government in 2007, with the introduction of the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*.

The sub-topic code for land rights is dominated by the introduction of the Native Title Act by the Keating government in 1993 in response to the High Court's Mabo decision of the previous year, enshrining a system to process native-title claims.<sup>357</sup> The *Native Title Act* was passed after the longest debate in the Australian Senate's history to that point.<sup>358</sup>

The political and legal rights sub-topic code includes issues such as indigenous participation in government contracting; constitutional change; and Commonwealth legal authority and assistance to indigenous legal systems. This area receives extremely low levels of attention, with only five policy statements or Acts of Parliament in the period from 1983 to 2011. Hawke, Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard all pay low or no attention to this area.

Examples of the kinds of issues that are categorised in the standards of living and community wellbeing sub-topic code include indigenous health programmes; child welfare in indigenous communities; and the management of indigenous development projects. The highest level of attention in this area came in 1999 under Howard with an increase in funding for healthcare for indigenous Australians, and the introduction of the Indigenous Opportunities Policy but this policy code receives low proportions of every government's policy agenda in budget speeches and Governor General speeches and Acts of Parliament over time.

## 5.26 Conclusion

This chapter has coded and analysed 11 Governor General speeches, 29 budget speeches and 4890 Acts of Parliament, using the PAP's coding framework. It has found only six areas of significant difference between the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. It has found that the governments analysed are remarkably similar in their choice of policy issues prioritised, and the issues chosen to exclude from the policy agenda. The key findings of this chapter are that all governments analysed here: Hawke, Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard have chosen to prioritise the same set of policy areas. They have also chosen to exclude the same

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<sup>357</sup> The Mabo decision by the High Court judged that the colonisation of Australia by England did not extinguish indigenous peoples' rights in land. It rejected the doctrine of *terra nullius* and compelled the Keating government to legislate for a system to deliver those rights.

<sup>358</sup> Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 206.

set of policy issues, despite some of these areas receiving high levels of attention in the media. Significantly, not only have these governments prioritised the same policy areas but there is also evidence that they afforded them similar proportions of their attention. This chapter argues that while statistically significant differences have been found between Howard and the Labor governments, these differences are few and are seen in the policy areas of: macroeconomics, health, energy, foreign trade and agriculture.

Macroeconomics dominates the policy agenda of all governments here, receiving the highest proportion of government attention of any of the policy areas. The Howard government attributes a lower proportion of its attention to this topic than the Hawke government but interestingly, the Howard government was the only government to prioritise other policy areas over macroeconomics in a budget speech. It happened on three occasions, 1999 to health, 2002 labour, employment and immigration and in 2004 where social welfare was accorded the highest priority.

Health policy is the only area that experiences significant difference in more than one measure, budget speeches and Acts of Parliament. Energy policy shows both the Keating and Rudd/Gillard governments allocating higher proportions of their attention in budget speeches than Howard to this topic but all governments allocate relatively low proportions of their agenda. Foreign Trade sees higher proportions of attention in budget speeches from the Hawke and Keating governments than the Howard government but the attention to this policy area shows a decreasing trend over time. Agriculture is similar in that while there is difference between Howard and the other governments, the trend line over time is decreasing, with Hawke and Keating paying more attention than Howard and declining further under the Rudd/Gillard government.

The analysis of policy punctuations finds that some of the largest punctuations to occur during this period are not found in the first terms of newly elected governments, but that policy punctuations more frequently occur during a government's second, third or fourth term. Policy punctuations in Howard's budget speeches show the largest punctuations occurring late in his time in office in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2007, showing that the Howard government differed greatest not from the Labor governments analysed here, but between the early and later terms of its own government.

This chapter's findings contradict much of the literature about the Howard government and its transformative nature. It shows a policy agenda characterised by stability not change. The arguments relying on claims that the Howard government was a sharp departure from the Labor governments that preceded and followed it are not supported by the evidence in this chapter. PAP tells us about a particular dimension of the policy agenda, a government's choice to be interested in macroeconomics, or agriculture or international affairs as distinct features of activity. It is concerned with measuring the extent to which the effort of government is focused on particular



public issues. It is not concerned with the nature of policy interventions. As a result, the next chapter considers an alternative characterisation of the Howard government through an analysis of the ideological spatial positioning of the Hawke, Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard governments in an attempt to determine whether the differences can be understood more as stemming from ideology than policy agenda.

## **Chapter 6 Comparative Manifestos Project Analysis**

The previous chapter argued that when compared with the Labor governments led by Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard, the Howard government cannot be considered significantly different in its policy agenda. This finding raises the question of how to explain the claims in the literature that the Howard government constituted a turning point in Australian politics. This chapter considers the question of whether it is more accurate to describe the Howard government as an ideological punctuation. To provide an answer to this question, the CMP coding system that employs left–right word identification is used to measure changes in emphasis within particular policy areas. The adoption of a coding system in this research facilitates a systematic approach to determine the extent to which governments during this period differ ideologically from each other. Analysis of this data provides clarity about the ideological evolution of the policy agenda under Howard, and whether the Howard government shifted the Australian political agenda to the right or left. The analysis of the Governor General speeches in this chapter demonstrates that the Howard government did indeed constitute an ideological punctuation. By this measure, Howard’s government is positioned differently ideologically from those led by Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard. However, when analysing budget speeches, the Howard government is positioned very similarly to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it.

This chapter begins by providing an account of some of the claims in the literature about the ideological positioning of the Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments. This is followed by a brief overview of some of the key themes to emerge from the CMP analysis. The third section revisits the advantages and limitations of the CMP coding scheme and details the documents used for the analysis. The final section of this chapter presents the results of the CMP analysis.

### **6.1 Ideological Positioning of Modern Australian Governments**

This section begins with a brief discussion of the manner in which ideological difference is mapped in the Australian political landscape. It then discusses the narratives that have emerged around specific governments from 1983 to 2011. This section does not offer a comprehensive or detailed review of the literature regarding the ideologies of the governments under research, rather it serves as a summary of some of the enduring perceptions and most widely held opinions of leading political academics and journalists, focusing on the Howard government.

The categories of left and right underpin a language of ideological difference that is used in the same way in Australia as it is elsewhere. This ideological categorisation is used to characterise party and voter positions across a number of policy areas. The left–right cleavage maps onto the Australian political context historically representing the Liberal Party as the party of the free market

and individual liberty, and the Labor Party as the party of workers' rights, big government and equality. There are competing wisdoms around ideologies in its Australian context.<sup>359</sup> Some support the notion that Labor is 'the most ideological of the main Australian parties, in the sense of its members being most inclined to have consistently patterned views of the world directed to political action'.<sup>360</sup> Others argue that Australian political parties are not particularly ideological at all, with Jaensch describing Australian political parties as 'a fusion of ideas, policies, and actions, the relationship among which has varied from party to party and from time to time'.<sup>361</sup> Most commentators do not explicitly place governments within a specific right-left scale; however, they do infer an ideological continuum and the position of governments when making comparisons and claims.

There is a growing body of work arguing that the differences in ideology have diminished between the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. However, there is no agreement as to when this convergence began.<sup>362</sup> Some commentators believe the convergence in policy between the parties began in the 1940s,<sup>363</sup> while others argue that it began in the 1980s under the Hawke government. These commentators argue that the Labor Party became more like the Liberal Party during this period, evidenced in its attitude to the free market and privileging the private sector. They also argue that the Liberal Party became more like Labor Party in their acceptance of higher levels of state welfare and increased state intervention in the market.<sup>364</sup> Interestingly, voters' perceptions about the degree of difference between the parties have changed over time. Voters saw the two parties as similar between 1993 and 2001 but this perception changed in the 2004 election, with voters saying that there was a good deal of difference between the parties.<sup>365</sup> This chapter will not

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<sup>359</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see D. Aitkin, *Stability and Change in Australian Politics*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1982; T. Battin, 'The Australian Labor Party and the Third Way', 2nd edn., in P. Boreham, G. Stokes, and R. Hall (eds.), *The Politics of Australian Society: Political Issues for the New Century*, Frenchs Forest, Pearson Longman, 2004; A. Fenna, *Australian Public Policy*, 2nd edn., Frenchs Forest, Pearson Longman, 2004; P. Mendes, *Australia's Welfare State Revisited: The Players, the Politics and the Ideologies*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2008; A. Norton, 'Liberalism and the Liberal Party', 2nd edn., in P. Boreham, G. Stokes, and R. Hall (eds.), *The Politics of Australian Society: Political Issues for the New Century*, Frenchs Forest, Pearson Longman, 2004.

<sup>360</sup> M. Grattan, 1973, p. 396.

<sup>361</sup> D. Jaensch, *The Hawke-Keating Hijack: The ALP in Transition*, Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 81.

<sup>362</sup> A discussion about when the 'convergence' began can be found in M. Goot, 'Party Convergence, Again', paper presented to the Australian Political Studies Association Jubilee Conference, Australian National University, October 2002.

<sup>363</sup> B. Head and A. Patience, 'Labor and Liberal: How Different Are They?', in A. Patience and B. Head (eds.), *From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and Reaction in Australian Politics*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1979.

<sup>364</sup> Jaensch, p. 84.

<sup>365</sup> Seen in the data from the Australian Election Studies 1993-2004.

revisit this continuity/discontinuity debate in depth other than to concur with Johnson's view that neither position offers a greatly nuanced understanding of a very complex set of issues.<sup>366</sup>

Brett identifies neo-liberalism as the ideology that has gained bipartisan support in Australia from the 1980s on.<sup>367</sup> Pusey shares her view that a neo-liberal agenda was supported by both major parties in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>368</sup> If their assessment is correct, identifying the manner in which the Howard government used public policy to advance its neo-liberal agenda should be straightforward. The policy emphasis one would expect to see from an explicitly neo-liberal government includes factors such as small government, with limited government intervention in the workings of the economy, and a preference for issues to be resolved by the market. The PAP analysis in the previous chapter found few significant differences between the policy agendas of Hawke, Keating and Howard, lending support to the claim of policy convergence but not necessarily to the dominance of neo-liberalism as the unifying ideology.

Some commentators argue that far from succumbing to neo-liberalism, the Australian welfare state became larger during this period, arguing that neither 'bipartisan economic liberalisation, nor competing party welfare policies, made much difference to the welfare state when viewed through a fiscal incidence lens'.<sup>369</sup> It should be noted that the term neo-liberalism has become a highly fashionable descriptor in recent times, becoming a rhetorical device with a 'negative normative valence'<sup>370</sup> despite it being mostly ill-defined or not defined at all.

Hawke has been portrayed as a new kind of Labor leader, with the governments led by him focusing on the competitiveness of the Australian economy and free-market orthodoxies, prioritising ties with the private and corporate sectors.<sup>371</sup> Kelly notes that the Hawke governments are remembered for their economic reform, which was in contrast to the legacies of previous Labor governments.<sup>372</sup> For Jaensch, this period saw a move away from ideology to pragmatism and a 'hijacking' of the Labor Party.<sup>373</sup> After the first year of Hawke taking office, commentary such as the following emerged:

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<sup>366</sup> C. Johnson, 'Gillard, Rudd and Labor Tradition', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 57, no. 4, 2011, p. 563.

<sup>367</sup> J. Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 167.

<sup>368</sup> M. Pusey, *The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

<sup>369</sup> A. Fenna and A. Tapper, 'The Australian Welfare State and the Neoliberalism Thesis', 2012, p. 155.

<sup>370</sup> T. Boas and J. Gans-Moore, 'Neo-Liberalism: From new Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2009, pp. 137– 161.

<sup>371</sup> N. Blewett, 'Robert James Lee Hawke', in M. Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, Frenchs Forest, New Holland, 200, p. 389; P. Kelly, *The End of Certainty*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 2008, p. 20.

<sup>372</sup> Kelly, *The March of Patriots*, p. 25.

<sup>373</sup> Jaensch.

An historic ideological role reversal is reshaping Australian national politics. So profound are its implications that the standard conservative/radical identifications assumed in the mainstream political analysis are becoming irrelevant and misleading. What seems to be happening, broadly, is this: under the leadership of Mr Bob Hawke the Labor Party is emerging as the true pragmatic conservative party of government, the heir to the Menzies tradition ... The Liberals, on the other hand, are becoming the true party of doctrinaire radicalism, a party of alternative and dissonant views, a party of opposition.<sup>374</sup>

On a Four Corners programme in 1987, Hawke himself claimed that he held no ideological position but made decisions in the interests of the country as a whole.

The literature on the Keating government contains a combination of narratives. While there is an acknowledgement of Keating's economic reforms (some of this is as a result of the eight years he served as Treasurer under Hawke's leadership), there is a strong focus on Keating's attention to cultural issues, his 'big picture' approach to government and his attention to ties with Asia, Aboriginal land rights and calls for Australia to become a republic.<sup>375</sup> Commentators also describe Keating's approach as embracing many of the policies of his conservative opponents, and as overturning 'long-held Labor shibboleths'.<sup>376</sup> Thatcher described Keating as 'refreshingly orthodox on finance'.<sup>377</sup> While the first narrative suggests a move to the left with a return to the traditional areas of focus for the Labor Party, the second suggests a move to the right. Whichever of the two narratives you accept, it is expected that the Keating government would be positioned to the left of the Howard government and possibly the Hawke government.

Much of the literature about Howard government centres on its ideological position in relation to the (Robert) Menzies government rather than in relation to Labor governments. It is interesting to note that much of the comparative ideological literature compares Labor Prime Ministers with other Labor Prime Ministers and Liberal Prime Ministers with other Liberal Prime Ministers, seemingly testing for consistency within the party traditions. For example, it is common to see comparisons of Hawke and Keating with Chifley or Whitlam, and comparisons of Howard with Menzies or Fraser, yet there is very little comparative work on Howard and Labor Prime Ministers. For example, 'The Howard Government has a sharper ideological edge than the former

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<sup>374</sup> *The Age*, 7 April 1984.

<sup>375</sup> S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>376</sup> D. Day, 'Paul John Keating', in M Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, Frenchs Forest, New Holland, 2000, p. 409.

<sup>377</sup> M. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, London, Harper Collins, 1993, p. 505.

Fraser Government. If Fraser's rule was defined by hard men, Howard's rule is defined by hard ideas'.<sup>378</sup>

As seen in Chapter 2, there is little in the literature on the Howard government's ideological underpinning that is uncontested. When comparing Howard to Menzies, two contradictory positions emerge. Some commentators argue that Howard overturned many Menzies policies,<sup>379</sup> while others claim that Howard was a return to Menzies. Some portray Howard as extremely right wing while others portray him as much more moderate. Many suggest that Howard moved his party to the right.<sup>380</sup> Manne argues that Howard's leadership can be understood as 'the attempted neo-liberal/neoconservative reconstruction of the Liberal Party tradition' and that Howard was not only a conservative Prime Minister, he was also 'an unusually ideologically driven one'.<sup>381</sup> For many who are critical of Howard, he is described as a very conservative Prime Minister. Howard himself described his party as follows: 'We are a party both of courageous reform when that reform is needed, and also a party that defends and preserves the traditions of Australia that we all cherish'.<sup>382</sup>

Errington attributes the characterisation of Howard as a conservative to Howard's views on social policy, arguing that Howard privileges an interventionist role for the state on issues such as drugs, censorship and welfare.<sup>383</sup> Kelly argues that the claim that Howard is a conservative is 'selective and exaggerated', relying on Howard's support for Australia remaining a constitutional monarchy.<sup>384</sup> Others claim that Howard was not an ideologue at all, but rather much more pragmatic in his approach.<sup>385</sup> Grattan describes him as a 'conviction politician',<sup>386</sup> while Brett argues that Howard adopted a mainstream and moderate approach to policy issues.<sup>387</sup> Howard himself avoided doctrinal discussion. His biographers describe him as someone who 'promoted himself as an ordinary bloke, with his values emanating from the suburbs of Sydney rather than

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<sup>378</sup> P. Kelly, 'How Howard Governs', in N. Cater (ed.), *The Howard Factor*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2006, p. 10.

<sup>379</sup> Errington and van Onselen, p. 401; G. Rundle, 'The Opportunist: John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction', *Quarterly Essay*, no. 3, 2001.

<sup>380</sup> Rundle.

<sup>381</sup> R. Manne, 'What Went Wrong?', in P. van Onselen (ed.), *The Liberals and Power: The Road Ahead*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 2008, p. 11.

<sup>382</sup> Cited in Errington and van Onselen, p. 217.

<sup>383</sup> W. Errington, 'Is the Howard Government Conservative?', *Quadrant*, September 2003, p. 22.

<sup>384</sup> P. Kelly, 'Re-thinking Australian Governance: The Howard Legacy', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 65, no. 1, 2006, pp. 7–24.

<sup>385</sup> Errington and van Onselen, p. xiv; M. Grattan, 'John Winston Howard', in M. Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, Frenchs Forest, New Holland, 2000, p. 438.

<sup>386</sup> Grattan, 'John Winston Howard', p. 438.

<sup>387</sup> J. Brett, 'Relaxed and Comfortable: The Liberal Party's Australia', *Quarterly Essay*, no. 19, 2005.

abstract ideas'.<sup>388</sup> Howard attributes his political success to a guiding philosophy or a 'directional touchstone' that provided consistency to his approach.<sup>389</sup>

There is broad agreement that Howard is economically liberal. Howard expressed this through his support for expanding individual freedoms and opportunities in and through the market, the provision of incentives for individuals to take risks and encourage entrepreneurialism, the promotion of financial deregulation, competition and privatisation, economic growth as the key deliverer of greater opportunities, and people's right to choose and voluntarily negotiate their individual workplace arrangements. Howard's economic liberalism is accompanied by a belief in the importance of government to provide a safety net so that economic efficiency cannot be decoupled from equity and fairness.

When drawn on his political philosophy Howard described his guiding principles as economic liberalism and social conservatism. There is a tension in these two principles, as they are not always well unified and have the capacity to produce policy inconsistencies, for example, the 2004 election campaign when the Howard government campaigned for Medicare Plus and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme co-payment increases. The Medicare Plus policy involved patients paying what the doctor charged over the scheduled fee. A policy on a co-payment rise in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme arguing that the government should pay less to subsidise medicine, and that the user-pays proportion should be higher, would be an approach more consistent with Howard's philosophy.<sup>390</sup> The policy position suggests a devolution of the user-pays principle, and an increased emphasis on collective responsibility for people's needs, something more consistent with a Labor Party social-policy position.

In his first year of government, *The Age* wrote that Howard 'fashioned himself and his behaviour to suit public opinion'.<sup>391</sup> However, some commentators argue that if 'Howard was influenced by polls on issues such as guns, immigration and asylum seekers, it was because the polls pointed him in the direction he already wanted to go'.<sup>392</sup> Grattan describes Howard as being 'committed to the ideology of economic reform, spliced with pragmatism', as well as a 'conviction politician'.<sup>393</sup> Some less kindly describe Howard as a political opportunist,<sup>394</sup> while some

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<sup>388</sup> W. Errington and P. van Onselen, *John Winston Howard: The Definitive Biography*, 2007, p. 216.

<sup>389</sup> J. Howard, Address to American Enterprise Institute, 'Sharing Our Common Values', Washington DC, 5 March 2008.

<sup>390</sup> For a more detailed discussion of these policies, see M. Rickard, 'Principle and Pragmatism: A Study of Competition between Australia's Major Parties at the 2004 and other Recent Federal Elections', *Department of Parliamentary Services*, pp. 39–43, [www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/monographs/rickard/mrickardmonograph.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/monographs/rickard/mrickardmonograph.pdf), (accessed 12 November 2013).

<sup>391</sup> *The Age*, 30 November 1996, cited in M. Groot, 'Politicians, Public Policy and Poll Following: Conceptual Difficulties and Empirical Realities', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, 2 June 2005, pp. 189–205.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> Grattan, 'John Winston Howard', p. 438.

commentators note instances in which the Howard government defied public opinion such as the sale of Telstra, opposition to euthanasia, and the decision to go to war in Iraq without United Nations authorisation.<sup>395</sup> A striking aspect of the literature is that while similar claims of political opportunism are levelled at both Howard and Hawke, Howard receives a level of vitriol about this that Hawke does not.

Simon Crean accused Howard of ‘so many backflips ... he can join the circus’.<sup>396</sup> Errington and van Onselen claim that Howard’s approach was often contradictory and could be at various times, liberal, conservative or radical. This view is supported by the analysis of this research.<sup>397</sup> This capacity for changing philosophy is contrary to the views held by people such as Liberal Party Federal Director, Brian Loughnane, who attributes Howard’s predictability as being central to winning elections because the electorate knew what to expect from him because he had been ‘committed to the same core values throughout his political career’.<sup>398</sup> Howard’s former speechwriter, John Kunkel argued that consistency was ‘a signature of the Howard brand’.<sup>399</sup> Albrechtsen argues that far from being ‘an opportunist, John Howard has shown remarkable philosophical consistency throughout his political career’.<sup>400</sup>

As highlighted in Chapter 2, some elements of the Howard era reforms are consistent with a neo-liberal agenda but others are not. For example, the Howard government used the power of the state to compensate for market failures when it determined it was necessary. For example, the Job Network (discussed in Chapter 4) was not given free rein, but had high levels of regulation in the manner in which services were to be delivered. The Job Network was strongly constrained in its operation, which means that while the policy decision to outsource employment services appears to be sending the message that the market can perform more efficiently than the public sector, the government regulated the sector heavily and retained tight control.

Howard described his approach to balancing principle and pragmatism while in office in a recent interview in the United States: ‘you have got to achieve a balance. I used to say to my colleagues in government: It was better to be 80 per cent pure in government than 125 per cent pure

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<sup>394</sup> G. Rundle, ‘The Opportunist: John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction’, *Quarterly Essay*, no. 3, 2001.

<sup>395</sup> Lewis, ‘The Howard Government’, pp. 83–95.

<sup>396</sup> S. Crean, CPD, Representatives, 5 April 2001, p. 26605.

<sup>397</sup> Errington and van Onselen, *John Winston Howard*, p. 217.

<sup>398</sup> B. Loughnane, ‘The Liberal Campaign’, in M. Simms and J. Warhurst (eds.), *Mortgage Nation: The 2003 Australian Election*, Perth, Network Books, 2005, p. 134.

<sup>399</sup> J. Kunkel, ‘Reflections on the “Howard Project”’, *Institute of Public Affairs*, May 2008, pp. 11–13.

<sup>400</sup> J. Albrechtsen, ‘PM, History Warrior’, *The Australian*, 25 October 2006.



in opposition. You can't become so obsessed with the last fine detail of the principle that you lose contact with the politics, but if you only trade in politics, then you will lose in the public'.<sup>401</sup>

A further criticism of the Howard government is the claim that it played 'wedge politics', the idea that electoral advantage can be gained by adopting policy positions that electorally disadvantaged opponents, even when the policy position is not consistent with one's own ideological beliefs. The objective is to adopt a policy position on issues that to which the political opposition has strongly differing views to induce a debate among the opponents, leading to the potential for them to weaken their unity and their electoral appeal. For example, in 2000, the introduction of the *Sex Discrimination Amendment Act 2000* allowing the states to discriminate against single women in accessing assisted reproduction arguably had the potential to cause a split on the issue between different factions of the Labor Party.

In the lead up to the 2007 election, Rudd positioned himself as an 'economically responsible, fiscal conservative'. Rudd's criticism of neo-liberalism saw differences with Hawke and Keating's economic rationalism,<sup>402</sup> and with the global financial crisis, these criticisms of unregulated market capitalism intensified.<sup>403</sup> The assertion that neo-liberalism is the dominant philosophy in Australian politics is contested by Rudd, arguing that the Liberal Party 'seeks to reduce the agency of the state in private markets' by 'embracing the neo-liberal tradition of anti-regulation',<sup>404</sup> and the Howard government is an example of neo-liberalism but that the Labor Party's nature is socially democratic.<sup>405</sup> However, somewhat paradoxically, Rudd asserts that neo-liberalism is the economic orthodoxy of our time.<sup>406</sup>

The narrative around Gillard's ideology is also contradictory at times. As a nominal member of the left faction of the Labor Party, she gained support from the right-wing factional leaders to replace Rudd as Prime Minister. In her economic ideology, Gillard espoused a less Keynesian approach than Rudd, asserting that 'good-quality, essential services ... can only be sustained by a government when our public finances are sound. That is why I believe in strong budget surpluses'.<sup>407</sup> Johnson argues that Gillard adopted an approach closer to that of Hawke and Keating

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<sup>401</sup> E. Soltas, 'Gun Control is "Apolitical": An Interview with John Howard', Bloomberg, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/print/2013-01-31/gun-control-is-apolitical-an-interview>, (accessed 7 November 2013).

<sup>402</sup> See 'Address to the Centre for Independent Studies', 2006, [http://www.cis.org.au/events/poicymakers/krudd\\_lecture.pdf](http://www.cis.org.au/events/poicymakers/krudd_lecture.pdf), (accessed 16 November 2006). See also 'Child of Hayek', *The Australian*, 20 December 2006, p. 12; Rudd, 'Howard's Brutopia', pp. 46–50.

<sup>403</sup> See 'The Global Financial Crisis', *The Monthly*, February 2009, pp. 20–28.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>405</sup> Rudd, *The Monthly*, 2006, p. 47.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> Cited in C. Johnson, 'Gillard, Rudd and the Labor Tradition', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2011, pp. 565.

in her attitudes to market policies.<sup>408</sup> Both the Rudd and Gillard governments extended the role of the private sector in the delivery of government services, for example, the Home Insulation Program and the Building the Education Revolution schemes, with Gillard seen as more ‘cautious’ than Rudd on progressive social issues. Many commentators describe Rudd and Gillard as poll-driven politicians, lacking the firm political ideologies that would enable them to create emblematic policy agendas.

One of the recurring themes in the literature is the notion that all the Prime Ministers in this research have shown the propensity to privilege a pragmatic policy approach over ideology. The harshest criticisms are reserved for Howard, but criticism has been levelled against all the governments analysed here. There is evidence in the literature on electoral studies that suggests there has been a broad shift in party competition away from selling an ideological perspective to marketing particular policies to sell.<sup>409</sup> In addition, voting behaviour has changed during the period analysed here, seeing a decline in the degree of loyalty voters show to political parties.<sup>410</sup> Many authors argue that voters no longer identify with the major parties as consistently as they once did, and so are less likely to automatically vote for the same party. Political parties have changed in response to this voting behaviour, with elections outcomes depending on the preferences of swinging voters. In this context, it is logical for political parties to target their policies to swinging voters. This pragmatic approach is not the only shared characteristic of modern political parties, with ideology and ideals used to distinguish themselves from their political rivals through what they stand for. That pragmatism occurs in a political context is not part of the argument here, but questions are raised about priorities, and how strongly the incentive to be pragmatic in policy encroaches on principled policy formation and where the line between principled and pragmatic policy positions lies.

Lewis notes the failure of much of the literature about the Howard government to consider the important relationship between government and public attitudes in the formulation of public policy.<sup>411</sup> Clearly, all governments in a liberal democratic system are mindful of public opinion

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid., p. 567.

<sup>409</sup> R.S. Katz and P. Mair, ‘Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party’, *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 5–38; D. Wring, ‘From Mass Propaganda to Political Marketing: The Transformation of Labour Party Election Campaigning’, in C. Rallings, D. Broughton, D. Denver, and D. Farrell (eds.), *British Parties and Elections Yearbook*, Hampshire, Frank Cass, 1995, pp. 105–124; D. Farrell and P. Webb, ‘Political Parties as Campaign Organizations’, in R. Dalton and M. Wattenberg (eds), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>410</sup> While there are different views as to how persistent the decline has been, there is strong evidence to support the claim. See R. Dalton and M. Wattenberg (eds), *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000; P. Webb, D. Farrell, and I. Holliday (eds.), *Political Parties at the Millennium: Adaptation and Decline in Democratic Societies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002; I. McAllister, *The Australian Voter: 50 Years of Change*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2011.

<sup>411</sup> Lewis, ‘The Howard Government’, p. 83.

because the public determines whether a government will be returned to office at the next election. This is not simply a reaction to public opinion but a consideration of the important role played by this interaction.<sup>412</sup>

The focus here is not to discern the degree to which the two parties reflect their respective party principles or ideals, or the degree to which they may or may not have allowed pragmatic and strategic electoral considerations to subsume their political ideas. The aim here is to map the ideological locations of the governments analysed here, and to discern whether Howard was different to the Labor governments in his ideological position.

While accepting the importance of the insights and analysis of the commentary in this section, there is a lot that this kind of analysis does not tell us. The following sections supplement this analysis by systematically mapping the relative ideological positions of the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it.

## **6.2 Key Themes**

Six key themes emerged from the analysis: some were expected and others were surprising. The first theme is not surprising. This is that when the Governor General speeches are analysed, the Howard government is positioned furthest to the right than any of the governments from 1983 to 2011. Governor General speeches provide the least surprising results in the analysis here, with all of the Labor Prime Ministers positioned on the ideological left and the Howard government positioned on the ideological right. Given that Governor General speeches are delivered at the beginning of a government's term in office, this speech being consistent with a government party's ideological position is to be expected.

The second key finding is that with respect to Governor General speeches, the Howard government is always positioned to the ideological right and the Labor governments are always positioned to the ideological left. The third finding is more unexpected. It reveals that the Howard government is not positioned furthest to the right in the budget speeches measurement, with the Keating and Gillard governments positioned further to the ideological right than the Howard government by this measurement, and with little difference in the ideological positioning of the Howard, Hawke and Rudd governments. This result is not consistent with the claims about the Howard government's pursuit of economic goals and a socially conservative agenda.

The fourth identifiable trend from the data analysis is that Howard government is less ideologically stable than the Labor governments analysed here. For example, the Howard government's 2004 budget speech is positioned furthest to the left (-25) than any other budget

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

speech, meanwhile his 1997 budget speech is positioned furthest to the right than any other budget speech (36).

The fifth finding is that there is an identifiable shift to the ideological left during the course of the Howard government. The sixth key finding is that Hawke, Keating, Howard and Rudd all produced budget speeches positioned on the ideological spectrum where you would expect in their early budget speeches (i.e. Labor Prime Ministers' to the left of centre and Howard's to the right of centre). However, all of them shift to the opposite position later in their term in office. For example, Hawke, Keating and Rudd all produce speeches to the right of centre late in their terms, whereas Howard's budget speeches shift to the left of centre. This supports claims about policy convergence and the shifting of the Liberal Party to the left and the Labor Party to the right

### **6.3 Coding for Spatial Position**

The question of how to measure the ideological positioning of the Howard government is central to this research. Governments and the political parties they lead perform many acts, some of which are subject to many circumstantial variables such as international conditions. One manner in which to measure ideology is to examine what governments say. Governments will be compared here through budget speeches and Governor General speeches by systematically applying a quantitative technique developed in the course of the CMP to spatially represent or map the ideological positions of the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. This approach allows for rigorous comparison and helps to throw systematic light on the dynamics of ideological change within Australia's major parties over a significant period in both economic and non-economic policy domains.

Many of the leaders here have been criticised for being unprincipled, for being inconsistent with the ideals of their party, for employing expedient policy initiatives, or for serving their own political interests. The literature approaches this topic at times with a tendency to think of a policy or a leader as principled, or at least ideologically consistent if it is in agreement with the principles the commentator happens to favour and unprincipled if not. Parties and leaders that are supported by the commentator are criticised when they do not adhere to their principles, and if they are not supported by the commentator, they are criticised when do adhere to their principles. The measurement for comparative purposes needs to be conducted along parameters that are commensurable between the political parties being compared. Adopting a particular philosophical position as a critical starting point would not easily lend itself to an independent and 'value-neutral' comparative analysis. The method adopted here puts aside questions about the rightness of a party or leader's principles in a more narrow and neutral manner.

It is useful to begin with a discussion about what is meant by the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ in the area of politics, and how these distinctions are made. These terms and the positioning of parties and governments’ ideological positions along a left–right continuum are very common in academic, journalistic and broader characterisations of political parties, and these descriptions are central to many comparative political discussions. The analysis of political texts has become an accepted way of measuring the left–right positioning of governments and their policies, and the CMP is the most prominent method employed.

This research applies the CMP to measure the ideological positions of the Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments, as detailed in Chapter 3. It is important to revisit some aspects of the CMP here before detailing the results of the analysis. The CMP classification scheme was designed to allow for coding the content of the election manifestos for the period post – World War II in over 25 democracies.<sup>413</sup> Since its development, the CMP has gained a ‘near monopoly status in the field’.<sup>414</sup> Table 3.1 in Chapter 3 lists the 56 standard categories.

As highlighted in Chapter 1 and detailed in Chapter 3, the coding unit of the CMP is the ‘quasi-sentence’ that contains one political idea or issue. Long sentences are able to be broken into quasi-sentences if the argument changes within the sentence or if more than one topic is developed, thereby enabling the overall argument to be identified in a sentence. The basic data that enable these comparisons are the shares of speeches devoted to each category in a set of standardised issue areas.

The results of the coding are scaled to create standardised scores, thereby enabling comparisons of speeches and documents of different lengths. As a result of the statistical correlation between the categories, and a party being of the left or of the right, the CMP argues that the degree to which a manifesto or policy speech places emphasis on these categories can be understood as a measure of the degree to which the manifesto is ideologically of the left or of the right. The measure

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<sup>413</sup> See the Manifesto Project Database at <http://manifestoproject.wzb.eu>. A sample of the literature on the Comparative Manifestos Project and its classification scheme can be found in I. Budge, D. Roberston, and D. Hearl (eds.), *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analysis of Post-War Election Programs in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; I. Budge, H. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara, and E. Tanenbaum with R.C. Fording, D.J. Hearl, H.M. Kim, M.D. McDonald, and S. Mendes, *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors and Governments, 1945–1998*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001; H. Klingemann, R.I. Hofferbert, and I. Budge, *Parties, Policies, and Democracy*. Oxford: Westford Press, 1994; M. Laver and I. Budge (eds.), *Party Policy and Coalition Government*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1992; D. Robertson, *A Theory of Party of Competition*, London, John Wiley & Sons, 1976; G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976; R. Thomson, ‘The Programme to Policy Linkage: The Fulfilment of Election Pledges on Socio-Economic Policy in the Netherlands, 1986–1998’, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2001, pp. 171–197; A. Volkens, *Manifesto Coding Instructions*, 2nd edn., Discussion Paper FS III 02-201, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB); A. Volkens, S. Alonso, and B. Gomez, *Content Analysing Multi-level Authority and Cultural Identity Claims: A Complement to the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) Exemplified for Spanish Regional Manifestos*. Discussion Paper SP IV 2009-202, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB).

<sup>414</sup> M. Laver and J. Garry, ‘Estimating Policy Positions from Political Texts’, *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 44, p. 620.

adopted by the CMP, the Rile Scale, measures the emphasis by the frequency with which the categories are mentioned in the text. Of the 56 categories, 26 are classified under CMP as left wing or right wing. Categories positioned on the left include issues such as extension of the welfare state and internationalisation; issues positioned on the right include the free-market economy, limitations of the welfare state, and law and order.<sup>415</sup> It is important to understand that the determination of the spatial positioning is not calculating whether there is a majority or minority of left-wing or right-wing statements, but by the number of left-wing versus right-wing statements relative to all statements. The scale ranges from 100 (for a party devoting its programme exclusively to right-wing issues) to –100 (for a party devoting its programme exclusively to left-wing issues). This is taken as a net ‘ideological score’. Where R is the total number of ‘right’ quasi-sentences, L is the total number of ‘left’ quasi-sentences, and N the total number of quasi-sentences:

$$\theta^{(s)} = \frac{R - L}{N} \times 100.$$

While the CMP has received widespread use, it is not immune to discussions of its limitations. As detailed in Chapter 3, concerns about the method are rooted in its theoretical assumptions. These concerns centre on debates about the continuing relevance of the left–right interpretation of ideology in electoral politics.<sup>416</sup> The status of the left–right dimension has been described in four ways. First, that the dimension is irrelevant due to its historical nature, making it immune to new meaning.<sup>417</sup> The second is that the historical understanding of left and right are merging into one ‘superideology’.<sup>418</sup> Third, that citizens in advanced economies take a level of material wealth for granted and therefore, focus on postmaterial values such as equality and free speech, thereby removing the value of the terms left and right.<sup>419</sup> Fourth, the pluralisation view argues that the left–right dimension is replaced by other dimensions of political beliefs and that political ideology is coming to an end.<sup>420</sup>

Commentators are correct to note more nuanced manners of considering the left–right dimensions. However, the use of the terms continue. The fact of the continued use demonstrates

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<sup>415</sup> I. Budge, H. Klingemann, A. Volkens, J. Bara, and E. Tannenbaum, *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors and Governments, 1945–88*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

<sup>416</sup> Examples of this argument can be found in D. Charnock and P. Ellis, ‘Postmaterialism and Postmodernization in Australian Electoral Politics’, *Electoral Studies*, vol. 23, 2004, p. 45; R. Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997; R. Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990; R. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1977.

<sup>417</sup> H. Kitschelt and S. Hellemans, ‘Left–Right Semantics in the New Politics Cleavage’, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1990, p. 215.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>419</sup> This is linked to Inglehart’s theory of a postmaterial value change in R. Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*, 1997.

<sup>420</sup> Kitschelt and Hellemans, ‘Left–Right Semantics in the New Politics Cleavage’, p. 234.

that the terminology has not lost its meaning and remains relevant. Its simplicity is the key to its explanatory scope and usage.<sup>421</sup> Politics by its nature presents the public with a choice, adopt change or retain the *status quo*. In the Australian context, the left–right continuum has particular resonance due to its consistency with its dynamic and political polarisation of Australia’s two-party system.

The CMP method offers this research a definitive, consistent and transparent approach to what constitutes left and right and as such, facilitates meaningful comparisons to be made between the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. The objective of this chapter is to subject budget speeches and Governor General speeches to quantitative content analysis using a common framework to measure governments’ policy-position preferences to make comparative claims. The CMP offers this research three benefits. The first is its consistent and clear criteria for comparing the Howard government with the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. The second is that it provides a means of measuring governments’ policy positions preferences and third, this method achieves reliable results. This approach allows the development of an alternative characterisation of the Howard government, as well as consideration of, engagement with and debate on this alternative characterisation. The CMP left–right scales have a strong claim to being a sound and useful measure of ideological positions over time. The scales are not without their limitations, which is true of most methodological tools and scales, but they are as (or arguably more) valid and reliable as any alternative.<sup>422</sup>

To perform the analysis, a data set was created that includes the following:

- budget speeches delivered by the Federal Treasurer from 1983 to 2011 (involving coding 6,255 individual sentences)
- Governor General speeches from 1983 to 2011.

While the CMP method has historically analysed political manifestos, this research applies the CMP coding scheme to the analysis of Governor General speeches and budget speeches. This choice is not uncontroversial but it is reasonable. Political parties in Australia do not produce a manifesto document but use a variety of speeches and other documents to communicate their policy programme. While the documents that are analysed here are not manifestos *per se*, they do reflect governments’ policy priorities. As outlined previously, Governor General speeches are written by the Prime Minister, delivered by the Governor General at the beginning of a term of government,

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<sup>421</sup> Sartori, p. 342.

<sup>422</sup> Notwithstanding this, it should be noted that the mappings produced in this project are the result of coding performed by one person (conforming with the prescribed coding instructions, and with each speech coded twice). Coding of the same material by a number of others may result in less ‘individual specific’ frequencies.

therefore, signalling the government's policy priorities for the term. Budget speeches accompany the government's budget and are delivered by the Federal Treasurer, outlining the priorities and resource allocation for the ensuing year, thus, reflecting the commitment of financial resources to policy issues. They are both political events used by Prime Ministers to position their government.

## 6.4 Results

The remainder of this chapter outlines and maps the results of the analysis of Governor General speeches and budget speeches from 1983 to 2011. The left-right position of the 29 budget speeches delivered between 1983 and 2011 using the standard policy classifications and coding method of the CMP has been analysed along with the 11 Governor General speeches delivered during this period.<sup>423</sup> The reliability of coding was established by a sample text provided by the CMP and blind coding the budget speeches. All of the budget speeches were blind coded a second time. The number of budget speeches and Governor General speeches under each Prime Minister varies as demonstrated in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Governor General and Budget Speeches from 1983 to 2011**

Prime Minister	Governor General Speeches	Budget Speeches	Speeches Analysed
Hawke	4	9	13
Keating	1	4	5
Howard	4	12	16
Rudd	1	3	4
Gillard	1	1	2

The results of the analysis are presented in Figures 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. Figure 6.1 displays the left-right Rile Score for each of the 29 budget speeches, Figure 6.2 presents each of the 11 Governor General speeches' Rile Scores, and Figure 6.3 presents the mean Rile Scores in budget speeches and Governor General speeches for each Prime Minister from 1983 to 2011. It is important to understand that right-wing speeches have a value of zero or greater, while left-wing speeches have a value less than zero.

As with the PAP analysis, budget speeches and Governor General speeches show different results. Therefore, the next section will detail the results separately before drawing together some of the key themes that emerge.

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<sup>423</sup> The CMP data for Governor General Speeches were used in K. Dowding, N. Faulkner, A. Hindmoor, and A. Martin, 'Change and Continuity in the Ideology of Australian Prime Ministers: The Governor-General's Speeches, 1946–2010', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2012, pp. 455–472.



#### 6.4.1 Budget speeches

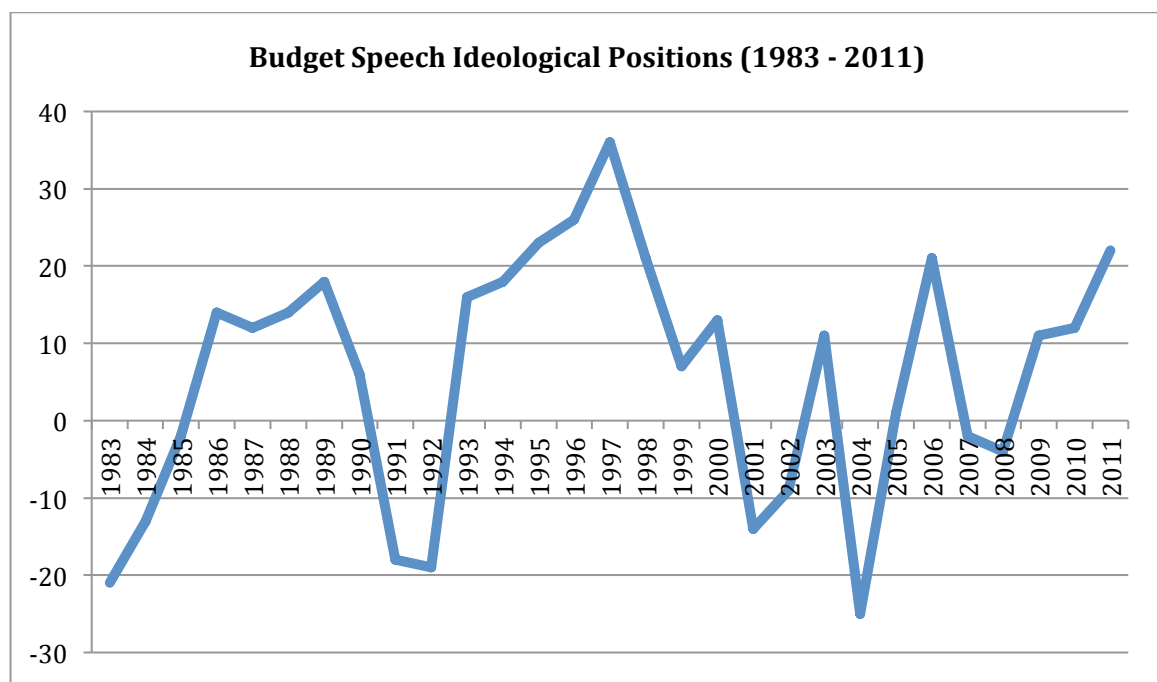
Figure 6.1 maps the ideological positions in the 29 budget speeches from 1983 to 2011. As can be seen, Howard and Labor Prime Ministers converge and diverge at various times. However, during this period, most budget speeches generally remained on the ideological right. The Labor governments are positioned on the ideological right (with a mean position of 5.2 points on the right), while the Howard government has also been predominantly positioned on the ideological right (with a mean position of 7.1 points on the right). The Hawke government is positioned on the ideological right (with a mean position of 1.1 points on the right), the Keating government is also positioned on the ideological right (with a mean position of 9.5 points on the right). The Howard government is positioned on the ideological right (with a mean position of 7.1 on the right), while the Rudd government is positioned on the ideological right with a mean position of 6.3 points on the right. The Gillard government is positioned furthest to the ideological right (with a mean position of 22 points on the right). As seen in Table 6.1, it is important to remember that the position of the Gillard government has been determined with only one budget-speech score. There have been a number of points at which Labor governments have been positioned on the ideological right (in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 2009, 2010 and 2011) and the Howard government on the ideological left (in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2007). Hawke, Keating and Rudd's first budget speeches are all positioned to the ideological left, with Hawke positioned on -21 on the left, Keating positioned on -19 on the left and Rudd at -4 on the left, while Howard's first budget speech was positioned to the ideological right at 26.

As seen in Figure 6.1, Hawke became progressively positioned further to the right (-21 on the left in 1983, -13 on the left in 1984, -2 on the left in 1985, but by 1986 he was positioned at 14 on the right, 12 on the right in 1987, 14 on the right in 1988, 18 on the right in 1989, and 6 on the right in 1990). However, his final budget speech saw a shift back to the ideological left in 1991 to be positioned at -18 on the left.

Keating followed a similar pattern to Hawke, starting in his first budget speech in 1992 on the ideological left positioned at -19 points on the left. Keating was Prime Minister for another three budget speeches, all of which were positioned on the ideological right (1993 positioned at 16 points on the right, 1994 positioned at 23 points on the right, and 1995 positioned at 23 points on the right).

Rudd followed a remarkably similar trajectory in which his first budget speech in 2008 was on the ideological left, although not as far to the left as Keating or Hawke (positioned at -4 points on the left). His two subsequent budget speeches were both on the ideological right (positioned at 11 points on the right in 2009 and 12 points on the right in 2010).

Figure 6.1 demonstrates that Howard's budget speeches followed a similar pattern in that they began where one would have expected them to, on the ideological right, but then moved to the left. Howard's first budget speech in 1996 was on the ideological right (with a position of 26 on the right), followed by a budget speech in 1997 that was further to the ideological right and positioned furthest to the right of any of the budget speeches analysed here (with a position of 36). This was followed by a budget speech in 1998, which while still to the ideological right (with a position of 21 points to the right), saw the beginning of a period that moved progressively to the ideological left, until the budget speech in 2001 in which for the first time, Howard produced a speech that was positioned on the ideological left (with a position of -14 points on the left). In 2002, there was a repeat of a budget speech on the ideological left for Howard (with a position of -9). This was followed in 2003 with a return to the ideological right (with a position of 11 on the right). In 2004, there was the biggest move in direction experienced in any of these speeches, with a move to the ideological left and a Howard budget speech positioned furthest to the left than any budget speech of all the governments analysed (with a position of -25 points on the left). This was followed by two budget speeches positioned to the ideological right (2005 with 1 point to the right and 2006 with 21 points to the right) before Howard's final budget in 2007, which was on the ideological left (positioned at -2 on the left).

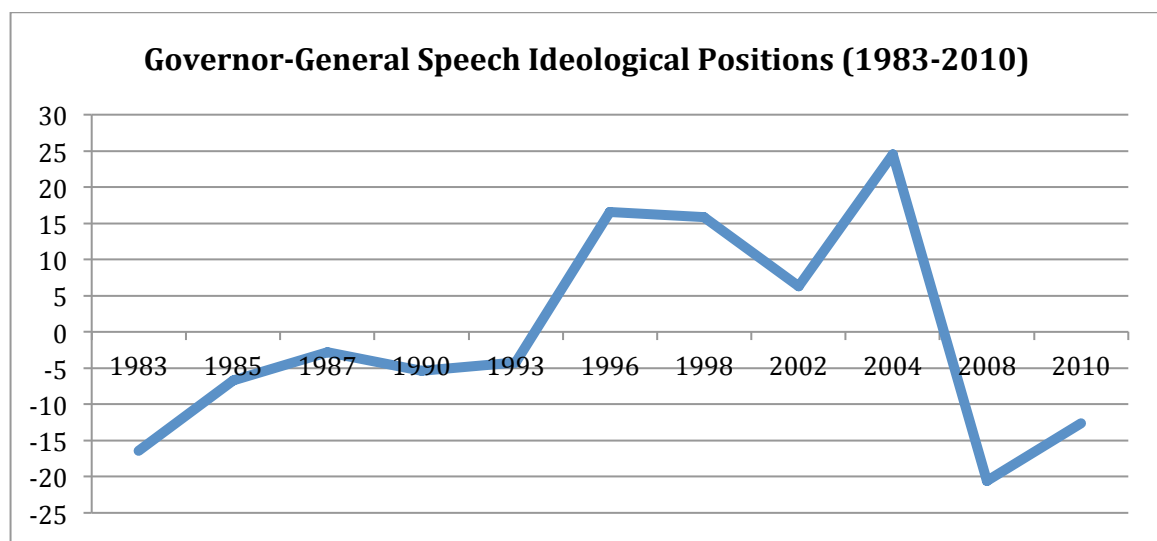


**Figure 6.1: Budget Speech Ideological Positions 1983–2011**

#### 6.4.2 Governor General speeches

Figure 6.2 maps the ideological positions of the 10 Governor General speeches from 1983 to 2010. During this period, Labor governments' speeches are positioned on the ideological left while the Howard government's speeches are positioned on the ideological right. As we saw in Table 6.1,

the Hawke government was in office for four Governor General speeches, the Keating government for one speech, the Howard government for four Governor General speeches and the Rudd and Gillard governments for one speech each. The Hawke government is positioned to the ideological left, with his first speech positioned furthest to the left with -16.4 points to the left. His next two Governor General speeches moved progressively closer to centre with the 1987 speech positioned at -6.7 points to the left and 1990's speech still on the ideological left positioned at -2.84 points to the left. Hawke's final Governor General speech saw a small shift further to the left, positioned at -5.3 points to the left. Keating's 1993 speech was also positioned on the ideological left at -4.19 points to the left, which is marginally to the right of Hawke's final speech. Rudd and Gillard were both positioned to the ideological left, with Rudd's speech positioned at -20.6 points to the left in 2008 (making this the furthest left of any of the speeches analysed here) and Gillard's speech positioned at -12.6 points to the left, which while it was a shift to the right, was still ideologically to the left. Howard had four Governor General speeches, and these are the only four speeches analysed here to be positioned to the ideological right. His 1996 speech was positioned at 16.5 points to the right, the 1998 speech was positioned similarly at 15.8 points to the right, followed by a shift closer to centre in 2002, positioned at 6.2 points to the right, and finally in 2004, his most ideologically right speech and the most ideologically right speech of any analysed here, positioned at 24.5 points to the right.

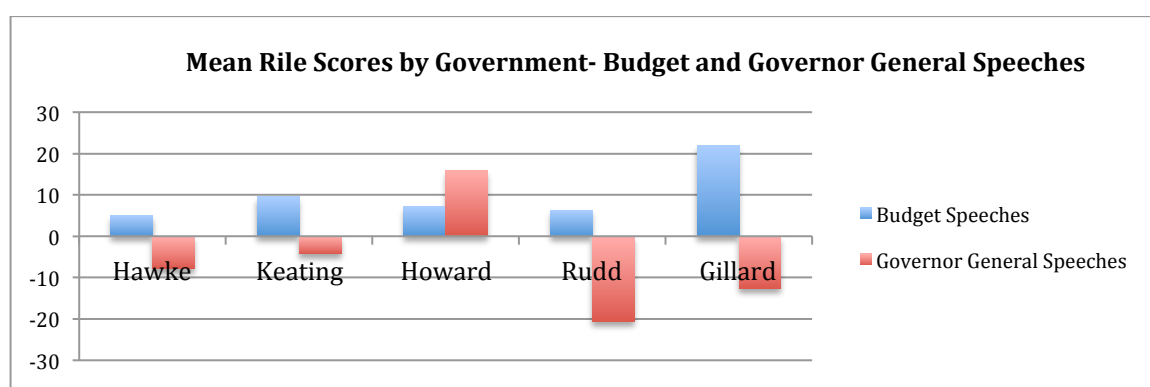


**Figure 6.2: Governor General Speech Ideological Positions 1983–2010**

As with the PAP analysis in the previous chapter, Governor General speeches and budget speeches show different results in the analysis. For example, the Governor General speech with the highest Rile Score was delivered under Howard in 2004. In that same year, Howard's budget speech was the most left wing of any budget speech analysed during this period. Only five out of the 11 Governor General speeches coincided with a budget speech that yielded a Rile Score on the same side. This means that over half produced the opposite result. The consistencies were in 1983 and 1985 under Hawke, 1996 and 1998 under Howard and 2008 under Rudd.

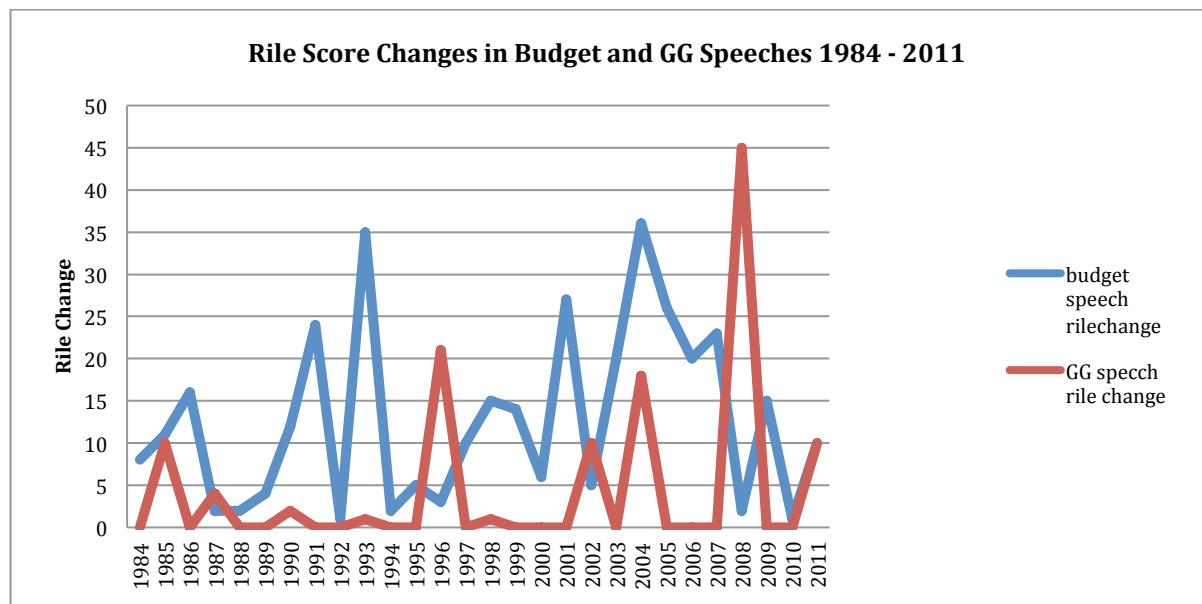
The budget speech scored to the left of the Governor General speech made in the same year on only two occasions, 2002 and 2004, both under the Howard government. All other instances see the Governor General speech as consistently more left than budget speeches. Budget speeches experience greater shifts from left to right and right to left than Governor General speeches.

All of the governments here are positioned on the right in their Rile Scores for budget speeches. Hawke was the most left of the governments analysed here in the budget speeches, despite the introduction of economic reforms due in large part to the role of the Accord. Rudd is positioned the next most left in budget speeches, due in part to the Keynesian-style economic stimulus programme adopted through the global financial crisis. It is important to stress here that Hawke, Rudd, Howard and Keating are all positioned quite similarly, while Gillard is the furthest from the mean and the most right wing of all the governments analysed. Gillard's position is predominately due to the attention paid to returning the budget to surplus.



**Figure 6.3: Mean Rile Scores for Budget and Governor General Speeches**

A further manner of considering the data is to examine the changes in Rile Scores (see Figure 6.4). It is important to remember when examining the Governor General speeches that these speeches do not occur every year. They occurred in 1985, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2008 and 2011. This provides an interesting manner of considering consistency and change. One of the claims about ideology in Australia is that it is playing less of a role in politics, and that politicians are becoming more opportunistic in their approach to policy.



**Figure 6.4: Rile Score Changes in Budget and Governor General Speeches 1984–2011**

The greatest changes in Rile Scores are seen in Rudd’s 2008 Governor General speech, Howard’s 200 budget speech, Keating’s 199 budget speech, Howard’s 2001 budget speech, Howard’s 2005 budget speech, Hawke’s 1991 budget speech, Howard’s 2007 budget speech and the 2003 and 2006 budget speeches under Howard.

It is interesting that the greatest change in Rile Score occurred in Rudd’s Governor General speech. This might be expected, as the Labor Party returned to office after an extended period in opposition; however, Rudd’s first budget speech recorded one of the smallest changes. This possibly reflects Rudd’s emphasis in the 2007 election campaign on his fiscally conservative approach. This does not align with his ‘Brutopia’ in which he described at length the brutal Australia that the Howard government and its ‘neo-liberal’ policies had created.

Hawke’s Rile Score changes in budget speeches and in Governor General speeches in 1985, 1987 and 1990 are relatively consistent. Conversely, Keating’s Governor General speech in 1993 changed a great deal from the previous year but his budget speech revealed almost no change in the Rile Score. Howard’s Governor General speech in 1996 revealed a large shift in Rile Score from Keating’s, as one might expect, yet his budget speech revealed little change from Keating’s 1995 speech. Howard’s next two delivered in 1998 and 2002, revealed similar shifts in Rile Scores in his Governor General speech as his budget speech. However, his 2004 Governor General speech saw a change, but not of the magnitude of his budget speech. Rudd’s 2008 budget speech revealed little change in the Rile Score from the Howard 2007 budget speech, despite the 2008 Governor General Rile Score seeing the largest change of any of the speeches analysed here. Gillard’s Rile Score change in the 2011 budget speech was exactly the same as the change in Governor General speech.

Many commentators describe Howard as a very conservative Prime Minister, yet his ideological positions are remarkably similar to those of the Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments, particularly in their budget speeches. Arguments claim that the Hawke and Keating governments' economic rationalism saw a 'hijacking' of the Labor Party, and this shift was not reversed under Rudd, despite his public rejection of neo-liberalism and Howard's 'brutopia'. Rudd's 2008 Governor General speech, which positioned his government furthest to the ideological left of any of the governments in this analysis, is consistent with his criticism of neo-liberalism and his desire to move away from a Howard-style agenda, yet this shift is less evident in his budget speeches. The evidence here supports the claim that while Rudd's Governor General speech was relatively radical and progressive, his allocation of resources in his budget speeches were not consistent with this approach. This raises questions about whether Rudd was able to implement his plans during his short term in office, and adds legitimacy to claims that Rudd failed to deliver on policy outcomes and programmes. A key failing that many argue contributed to his removal as Prime Minister.<sup>424</sup>

The two greatest changes in ideological positioning in Governor General speeches came with the election of the Howard government and the election of the Rudd government. However, the two greatest changes in ideological positioning in budget speeches occur in 1993 under Keating and in 2004 under Howard, both intra-governmental changes. Change of government (from the Australian Labor Party to Liberal or vice versa) sees the greatest differences in Rile Scores in Governor General speeches but this is not the case in the budget speeches. The greatest shift occurs in 2004 under Howard, eight years after he was first elected. The next greatest shift occurs in 1993 under Keating. Neither of these two years had a change in government, but it is important to note that they were both election years. Of the 10 greatest changes in speeches in the Rile Scores from one year to the next, seven occurred under Howard. Of the Howard government's 12 budget speeches, four were positioned on the ideological left.

The most interesting year to consider in this data is 2004. This year marks the beginning of Howard's final term in government. It produces the speech positioned furthest to the right of any speech analysed here: Howard's 2004 Governor General speech. It also produces the speech positioned furthest to the left of any speech analysed here: Howard's 2004 budget speech. The budget speech was positioned to the left due to the 'largest package of measures ever to assist families who are juggling work and child-rearing',<sup>425</sup> and 'new maternity payment for every mother

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<sup>424</sup> For example, see the leaked reports of Labor's review of the 2010 election campaign, T. Bramston, 'ALP Told to Listen to Party Elders', *The Australian*, 24 February 2011, p. 1.

<sup>425</sup> P. Costello, 2004 Budget Speech.

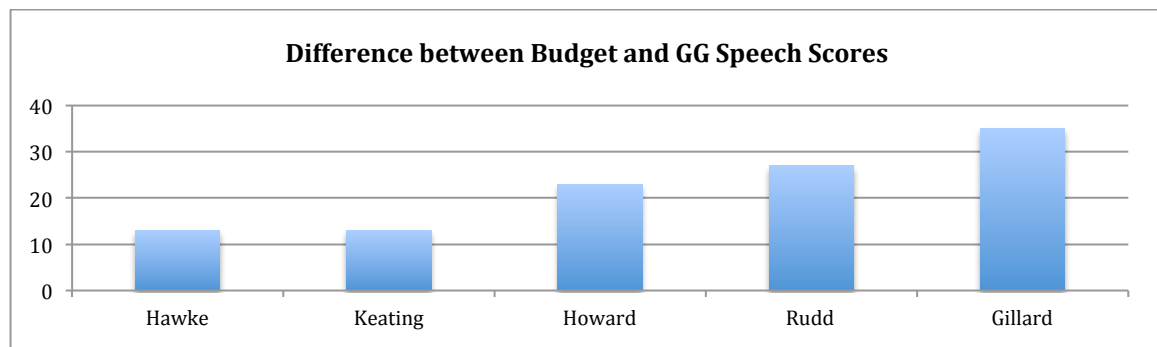
on the birth of a child',<sup>426</sup> increases in child-care payments, increased payments to those on carer allowances, and increased funding for aged-care places. It is interesting that some criticise these measures as evidence of Howard's socially conservative values to keep women at home to raise children. This is an example of the manner in which policies can be interpreted as ideologically conservative by some commentators. However, if these policies been introduced by a Labor government would most likely have been described as progressive. The 2004 Howard Governor General speech was positioned furthest to the right of any speech analysed here due principally to the increased attention paid to law and order issues, international terrorism and security threats, and Australia's counter-terrorism capabilities.

The argument that Hawke and Keating remoulded the Labor tradition and positioned it further to right is supported by this analysis, and the findings here are consistent with the literature on this period. This analysis reveals little difference between Howard and the Labor leaders in ideology. Rudd moved his party to the left of Howard, but it appears Gillard moved the party further right than Howard. Rudd is marginally left of Howard in budget speeches. However, while Gillard is left of Howard in Governor General speeches, she is much further right than either Howard or Rudd, or indeed Hawke or Keating, in budget speeches. This may be attributed to the need for her minority government to make pragmatic adjustments to its policy positions to gain and retain the support of the Independents and to avoid major business campaigns against it such as that which occurred under Rudd with the mining super profits tax.<sup>427</sup> However, it would appear the focus on decreasing the budget deficit is pivotal to the result. It is important to be mindful that the Rile Score for Gillard is based on only one Governor General speech and one budget speech, whereas there are greater data sources for the other Prime Ministers. As such, care should be taken when drawing conclusions about the ideological position of her government.

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

<sup>427</sup> For an account of previous business campaigns against Labor, see C. Johnson, 'Election 2004: Labor and Business: Could Labor's Campaign be Damaged by the Oldest 'wedge' of all?', *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 14 September 2004, <http://www.econ.usyd.edu.au/drawingboard/digest/0409/johnson.html>, (accessed 12 July 2011).



**Figure 6.5: Difference between Mean Rile Scores for Budget and Governor General Speeches**

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter's objective was to test the narrative that the Howard government constituted a turning point in Australian politics, that Howard was different as a Prime Minister, that he changed the country to an extent that was previously 'inconceivable'.<sup>428</sup> Its purpose was to determine whether the Howard government could be characterised as an ideological punctuation. The data from the coding of Governor General speeches and the budget speeches has enabled comparative work to be executed on the degree to which government led by Howard differ ideologically from the Labor governments that preceded and followed it.

The analysis of Governor General speeches demonstrates that the governments led by Howard are positioned further to the right than those led by the Labor Prime Ministers. This is not completely surprising when one considers that Governor General speeches are delivered at the beginning of a government's term. This means that these speeches would be more likely to demonstrate alignment with the party's traditional ideology. The budget-speech analysis sees both the Keating and Gillard governments positioned further to the right than the Howard government, with little difference in ideological positioning between Howard, Hawke and Rudd. These results point to the challenges inherent in implementing a political agenda.

Prior to the CMP analysis, it would have been reasonable to expect the Howard government to be positioned furthest to the right of all of the governments analysed here. Rudd being the most left of the group was not expected; Keating and Gillard being to the right of Hawke was also unanticipated. Another unexpected result to emerge from the analysis of the budget speeches was that the Howard government was positioned to the left of both the Keating and Gillard governments. It is reasonable to expect that Howard would have the most right budget speech of any Prime Minister, but it was unexpected that his 2004 budget speech was the most left of all the budget speeches analysed here.

<sup>428</sup> R. Manne, 'The Insider', 2009, p. 35.



All of the governments are positioned in the expected ideological positions early in their terms (i.e. Labor governments to the left of centre and the Howard government to the right). However, these positions do not remain static during their time in office, as each Prime Minister is shown to become more centrist. This finding, coupled with the difficulty of implementing a policy agenda, as evidenced in the different positioning in Governor General speeches and budget speeches, is worthy of additional research. Howard moves to the left, and the Labor governments move to the right, lending support to the argument that pragmatism is privileged in modern Australian politics over ideology. These results also support the view that this era, Australian politics experienced policy convergence, with the shifting of the Liberal Party to the left and the Labor Party to the right. This may suggest that governments are less driven by the pursuit of an ideological agenda than they are by the pragmatic concerns of government.

In the course of answering its question, this chapter has explored some dimensions of the relationship between ideology and pragmatism in the policy formation of the Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments. It has also considered how the notion of left-wing and right-wing political ideology has been affected by the embracing of free-market economic theory, deregulation and a move towards market-oriented economic rationalism in Australia.

Finally, this chapter has made further progress in charting the policy agenda in Australia by considering the ideological spatial dimension of budget speeches and Governor General speeches between 1983 and 2011. It is important to stress that this research has offered a systematic study of the ideology of these governments. It has used both quantitative and qualitative measures to contribute to a more measured and sophisticated debate, one that considers the comparative ideology of the Howard government in modern Australian politics.

## Chapter 7 The Whitlam and Blair Governments

Chapter 5 reveals that the Howard government did not substantially change the Australian policy agenda, and that its agenda was startlingly similar to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it in its policy agenda and the prioritisation of particular policy issues. This finding raises a question about whether these results reveal new information about the Howard government, or whether they reveal the limitations of the PAP. This chapter's objective is to address this concern by considering two additional cases. This chapter will first apply both the PAP coding method and the CMP coding system to the Whitlam period of government, which was a government widely acknowledged within the literature to have been one of significant change in Australian politics. If the PAP method is able to detect change in an Australian context, it is expected it should be evident during the Whitlam era. The second case applies the PAP coding method to the United Kingdom when Blair and New Labour came to power in 1997 to detect whether change in this political agenda is evident. The Blair government is also seen in the literature as changing the country's political agenda, and again it would be expected that if PAP is able to map change, this change will be reflected in the analysis here.

The comparative work in this chapter is important, as the findings in the previous chapters about the Howard government are not consistent with many of the claims in the literature. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the methodology that serves as the basis of claims in this research is capable of measuring change in the manner in which it has been used to analyse the Howard government. The choice of these two tests is not unproblematic, with any number of comparisons available to be chosen. However, it is not possible in this research to analyse every change of government to validate the methodology's capacity to detect changing agendas. As mentioned earlier, many see the Whitlam years as a time of change in modern Australian politics. Whitlam campaigned on a reform agenda, coming to power after a long period of Coalition government. Megalogenis explains that 'Australians elect Labor governments to change things'.<sup>429</sup> As such, the Whitlam comparison provides a good test of PAP's capacity to map change in the policy agenda in the Australian context.

The choice to analyse data from the United Kingdom is a little more contentious but nevertheless, defensible. There are two main reasons why this case is an appropriate choice. The first is that as in Australia, the 1980s and 1990s, the United Kingdom had a long period of government followed by a change in party power. Blair was Prime Minister from May 1997 until

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<sup>429</sup> G Megalogenis, 'Trivial Pursuit: Leadership and the End of the Reform Era' *Quarterly Essay*, no. 40, p. 4.

June 2007, encompassing much of the time that Howard was Prime Minister of Australia, thereby providing a similar set of global circumstances and period in which to apply the test.

There are major differences between the governments Blair and Howard led. Blair led the Labour Party while Howard led the Liberal Party in Australia. As such, one would expect to see them pursue very different agendas. However, Howard came to office after long period of Labor government, while Blair came to office after a long period of Conservative rule. It is important to be clear that the objective here is not to compare Blair to Howard, but rather to test whether PAP is able to detect change in the agenda on the election of a new government.

The second argument for choosing the United Kingdom comparison is that the United Kingdom and its Westminster system offer parallels with Australia's system of government. The monarch of Great Britain is also formally the Queen of Australia. Both systems are based on a popularly elected Parliament where legislative power is vested in two chambers: in Britain, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and in Australia, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Both political systems are multi-party but are dominated by the two largest parties. In Britain, these are the Conservative Party and the Labour Party, in Australia, these are the Liberal Party and the Labor Party.

While there are similarities there are also differences between the two systems. For example, while Australia's system of government reflects the British system, it also has adopted some aspects of North American federalism model. However, given the similarities and the similar circumstances in change of government after a long period out of office, and the fact that the Blair government was in office at a similar time to that of the Howard government, the parallels are strong enough to justify the choice of the United Kingdom and the Blair government as a test of the PAP method to map agenda change.

If election theory holds, one would expect to see evidence of sudden changes in agenda on the election of both Whitlam and Blair. As outlined in Chapter 5, this was not the case with the Howard government. If PAP's capacity to measure and map change is to be verified, it is reasonable to expect that this test should provide evidence of agenda change in both these cases.

## **7.1 Whitlam Comparison**

The Australian analysis encompasses the period from Harold Holt's time in office in 1966 to Fraser's Prime Ministership in 1978. This was an unusual period in Australia's political history because of the number of individuals who held office. The Prime Ministers during this time are presented in the following list:

- Harold Holt: 26 January 1966 – 19 December 1967

- John McEwen: December 1967 – January 1968 (appointed until new leader chosen)
- John Gorton: January 1968 – March 1971
- William McMahon: March 1971 – December 1972 (displaced Gorton as Liberal Party leader)
- Gough Whitlam: December 1972 – November 1975 (led Labor to win government for the first time in 23 years)
- Malcolm Fraser: November 1975 – March 1983 (became ‘caretaker’ Prime Minister pending a general election, which he won in December 1975).

The changes began with the disappearance of Holt, followed by the short-term interim appointment of McEwen, and the appointment of Gorton as leader of the Liberal Party. Gorton was then replaced in a leadership ballot by McMahon. McMahon occupied the role of Prime Minister for fewer than two years before the federal election that saw Whitlam become Prime Minister. This period of Liberal Party history is often characterised unfairly and quite simplistically as shifting from its peak under Menzies, declining through Holt, Gorton and McMahon, and culminating in the electoral defeat of 1972. This characterisation of an inevitable downward slide after Menzies’ retirement overlooks a range of factors, not least of which is that the Coalition, led by Holt, won the federal election of 1966 with a large swing, a majority of 39 in the House of Representatives and the Coalition’s best result since 1951.<sup>430</sup>

In the Australian public consciousness, Holt can be said to be most strongly remembered for two things: his comment on the White House lawn in 1966 when he declared that Australia would be ‘all the way with LBJ’ in South Vietnam, and even more for his disappearance. Clearly, he is much more than the sum of these two events. He succeeded Menzies on Australia Day 1966 as the unanimous choice of his party after serving as a member of the House of Representatives for almost 30 years, Treasurer for seven years and Deputy Prime Minister to Menzies for 10 years.

Holt presided over a period of economic boom in Australia despite a long drought and low levels of consumer spending. His government encouraged non-European immigration and relaxed residency aspects of the White Australia Policy while maintaining a commitment to the continuing privileging of ‘social homogeneity’. Holt also prioritised closer ties with Asia, visiting Singapore, Saigon, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Tenedak, Butterworth, Sarawak, Cambodia, Laos, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea during his time as Prime Minister. Whitlam noted that Holt ‘made Australia better known in Asia and he made Australians more aware of Asia than ever before’.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> I. Hancock, in M. Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, Frenchs Forest, New Holland, 2000, p. 278.

<sup>431</sup> Cited in I. Hancock, in M. Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, Frenchs Forest, New Holland, 2000, p. 277.

Holt was committed to Australia's role in the war in Vietnam seeing it as playing an important role in ensuring Australia's safety, repelling communist aggression and supporting United States as an ally. He won the federal election in 1966, fought predominately on the issue of Australia's participation in the Vietnam War.

The end of Holt's Prime Ministership came with his disappearance during a swim at a Portsea beach at his family seaside home. He was replaced by the Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Country Party, 'Black Jack' McEwen was Prime Minister for 23 days.<sup>432</sup> Gorton contested and won the Liberal leadership after Holt's death, and McMahon became his Deputy Prime Minister. The leadership ballot had been delayed by the fact that Holt's body was not found, and it was 'regarded as proper to allow a decent period to elapse before conducting a ballot to determine his successor'.<sup>433</sup>

After Holt had led the Coalition to a dominant victory in 1966, three years later, Gorton was not expected to reproduce that result. The swing against the government was large, 7.5% despite a growing economy and low inflation. Foreign policy was difficult and public support for Australia's continuing role in the Vietnam War was diminishing, but the Coalition retained government with Gorton re-elected as Liberal leader. However, after a party-room coup in March 1971, Gorton resigned his leadership and was replaced by McMahon.

McMahon had delivered four budgets as Treasurer between 1966 and 1969. He had also unsuccessfully contested the leadership following the 1969 election. After the leadership challenge in 1971, McMahon was elected party leader and Gorton as deputy. Reid notes that half 'his Cabinet and half his party resented his leadership from the outset, believing that Gorton had been unjustly treated'.<sup>434</sup> A year after McMahon succeeded Gorton, the Labor Party were leading in the opinion polls. In their final budget, the McMahon government introduced generous income tax cuts and pension increases but this did little to change the impending electoral result. The Labor Party's campaign in the 1972 election included a 'Don't Laugh at Billy' programme, which was a reference to the disrespect felt by many towards the competency of Prime Minister McMahon.

Whitlam became Australia's first Labor Prime Minister in over two decades by defeating McMahon at the general election in December 1972. He came to office at a time when Australia was reaching the end of a prolonged economic boom, and facing a difficult global economy that was suffering oil shock and stagflation due to the United States borrowing for the Vietnam War. The reforms, referred to as 'the Program' that Whitlam initiated were broad ranging in their policy

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<sup>432</sup> Earle Page was Prime Minister for 20 days and Frank Forde for eight.

<sup>433</sup> G. Henderson in M. Grattan (ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, Frenchs Forest, New Holland, 2000, p. 307.

<sup>434</sup> A. Reid, *The Bulletin*, 9 February 1980.

areas, with his government passing a record number of Bills through federal Parliament. While his government passed many pieces of legislation, the Senate also rejected 93 Bills, more than the total number rejected during the previous 71 years of Parliament.<sup>435</sup> This triggered events that led to the dismissal of his government fewer than three years after it was elected. In November 1975, Whitlam was dismissed from office by the Governor General and replaced by the then leader of the Opposition, Fraser. A federal election was held one month after his dismissal in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament, with the caretaker Fraser government elected in a landslide result in December 1975.

Many would agree that no Prime Minister changed Australia more than Whitlam. Lindsay Tanner claims that 'no other Australian politician has ascended to the realms of mythology quite like Gough Whitlam has'.<sup>436</sup> No event in Australia's political history has received as much attention in both the media and academic literature as the dismissal of the Whitlam government in November 1975. While the circumstances surrounding the dismissal of the Whitlam government has added to the mythology, the Whitlam government holds a unique place in modern Australian politics. It evokes nostalgia and fondness in some academics, a longing for those times is palpable in a great deal of what is written of Whitlam. For example, Tanner romantically describes the Whitlam government as an 'extraordinary symphony of soaring violins, crashing cymbals and thundering tubas'.<sup>437</sup> Others, however, describe the Whitlam government as incompetent and completely lacking in capacity to manage the Australian economy, resulting in a constitutional crisis that Australia had never seen.<sup>438</sup>

For a great number of Australians, Fraser is remembered for the events of 1975 that led to the dismissal of the Whitlam government. Replacing Whitlam as Prime Minister, Fraser won three elections, 1975, 1977 and 1980 as leader of the Liberal Party. Ramsey provides a colourful, if less than flattering, description of this period:

Holt was happier in a wetsuit than ever he was in the The Lodge but, in the end, no more competent. Gorton had an Australianism and a woolly vision of what he wanted the country to be like, but he was a political accident with no capacity to give political substance to his Australianism or administrative substance to his vision. As for McMahon, what to say? Another of Menzies' mushrooms is about the kindest way I can remember him. It was madness to make him Prime

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<sup>435</sup> National Archives of Australia, [primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/Whitlam/in-office.aspx](http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/Whitlam/in-office.aspx), (accessed 24 April 2013).

<sup>436</sup> L. Tanner, 'Gough Whitlam at 95 Years', *The Monthly*, July, 2011, p. 8.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> D. Smith, 'The Truth about the Dismissal', *Quadrant*, vol. 49, no. 3, March. 2005, p. 160.

Minister—and, of course, the Australian people never did. Only the Liberal Party in its desperation did that and Whitlam just rolled over the top of him.<sup>439</sup>

The legacy of the Whitlam government is a fascinating and important topic in modern Australian politics; however, it is not the focus of this chapter. The objective here is to review the period of government from Holt's government in 1966 to Fraser's government in 1978 to establish whether the PAP coding system is able to detect a change in the agenda during the Whitlam era. If it is not able to detect change, there will be ramifications for the hypothesis of this thesis, which proposes that the Howard government did not dramatically transform Australia's political agenda. If change is able to be mapped by the PAP, it lends support to the arguments in this research and provides further justification for the methodological choices in this dissertation. It may be argued that it is known Whitlam changed the agenda in Australian politics and that this chapter merely repeats what is already known. However, this analysis serves to demonstrate whether PAP can detect and map change in the Australian context when it widely agreed that this change has occurred. This would substantiate the conclusion that if PAP did not detect a change in political agenda under the Howard government it is because substantial change to the agenda did not occur.

## 7.2 Methods and Data

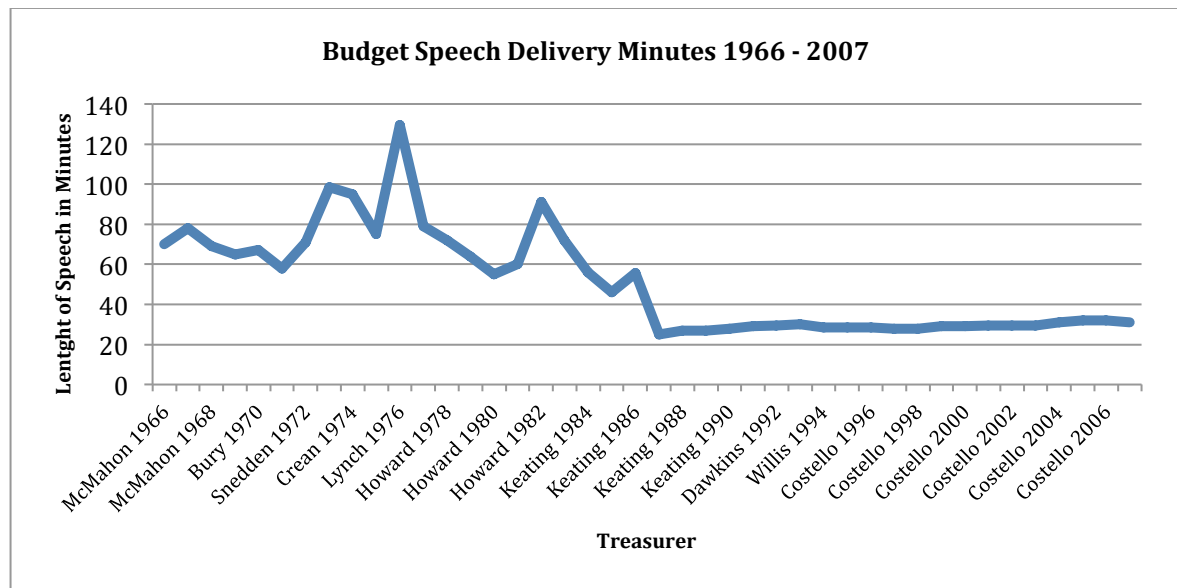
The Whitlam analysis covers the period from January 1966, after the first federal election after Menzies' retirement, to the Fraser government in 1978. The documents used for this analysis are the budget speeches and Governor General speeches from this period. The data for the Governor General speeches has been obtained from the Australian PAP. Every budget speech during this period has been coded for this research, which involves breaking each budget speech into quasi-sentences for each sentence to be assigned a code, resulting in 5,531 lines of text for coding.

The format and style of Governor General speeches have remained the same during this period but budget speeches experience a degree of change. While the format of budget speeches has not changed, the length of speeches fluctuated from 1966 to 1987. For example, in Figure 7.1, the 1976 speech, following the dismissal of the Whitlam government, exceeded two hours but since Keating's 1987 budget speech, each speech has been delivered in less than half an hour. Prior to the 1980s, budget speeches were over an hour long in their delivery in Parliament. As such, for this analysis, there is substantially more content to be analysed than for the earlier Howard analysis. While this is an important change, it does not affect the outcome of the analysis because PAP

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<sup>439</sup> A. Ramsay, *The Way They Were: 25 Years that Made Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 2011, p. 213.

focuses on the relative proportion of attention a policy issue receives, not the absolute attention, which accommodates the change in the nature of these speeches over time.



**Figure 7.1: Budget Speech Delivery in Minutes 1966–2007<sup>440</sup>**

### 7.3 Results: Budget Speeches 1966–1978

#### 7.3.1 Mann–Whitney test: testing differences between two independent groups

Mann–Whitney tests were used to test differences between governments in frequency of topic mentions in budget speeches (two groups created). First, tests were conducted between governments pre-Whitlam (i.e. Holt, Gorton and McMahon, and Whitlam), then between Whitlam and Fraser. There are seven statistically significant differences between the Whitlam government and the Liberal governments that preceded and followed it. In the Liberal governments pre-Whitlam to Whitlam comparisons, significant differences are found in five policy areas. These are in the areas of macroeconomics, health, transportation, law and community development. Whitlam paid higher proportions of attention to all of these policy areas. In the Whitlam to Fraser comparison, two differences exist: in energy (Fraser higher) and community development (Whitlam higher).

Whitlam allocates greater proportions of his agenda than the Holt, Gorton and McMahon governments to the following policy areas: macroeconomic issues (Whitlam  $Mdn = 8.67$ ; Holt, Gorton and McMahon  $Mdn = 4.14$ ),  $W_s = 29.00$ ,  $z = -2.17$ ,  $p = .030$ ; energy (Whitlam  $Mdn = 9.00$ ; Holt, Gorton and McMahon  $Mdn = 4.00$ ),  $W_s = 30.00$ ,  $z = -1.94$ ,  $p = .14$ ; transportation (Whitlam  $Mdn = 8.67$ ; Holt, Gorton and McMahon  $Mdn = 4.14$ ),  $W_s = 29.00$ ,  $z = -2.18$ ,  $p = .029$ ; law, crime and family (Whitlam  $Mdn = 9.00$ ; Holt, Gorton and McMahon  $Mdn = 4.00$ ),  $W_s = 28.00$ ,  $z = -2.94$ ,

<sup>440</sup> Budget Speech delivery times collated by the Chamber Research Office, House of Representatives, 31 May 2007 [http://www.peo.gov.au/students/fss/quirky/budget\\_speech\\_times.pdf](http://www.peo.gov.au/students/fss/quirky/budget_speech_times.pdf), (accessed 20 July, 2011).



$p = .003$ ; and community development (Whitlam  $Mdn = 9.00$ ; Holt, Gorton and McMahon  $Mdn = 4.00$ ),  $W_s = 28.00$ ,  $z = -2.41$ ,  $p = .016$ . Whitlam allocated attention to community development ( $Mdn = 5.00$ ) more than Fraser ( $Mdn = 2.00$ ),  $W_s = 6.00$ ,  $z = -1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ , while Fraser allocated a higher proportion of his agenda to energy ( $Mdn = 5.00$ ) than Whitlam ( $Mdn = 2.00$ ),  $W_s = 6.00$ ,  $p = .05$ .

### 7.3.2 Agenda-stability measure

Following Siegelman and Buell's (2004) measure of agenda stability, issue compositions of government agendas in budget speeches between 1966 and 1978 were as presented in Table 7.1:

**Table 7.1: Agenda Stability in Budget Speeches 1966–1978**

Year	Stability
1967	81.57
1968	64.68
1969	75.85
1970	70.73
1971	86.83
1972	81.07
1973	78.53
1974	85.89
1975	71.48
1976	72.84
1977	78.09
1978	89.00

As detailed in Chapter 5, this measure demonstrates how far a budget speech converges from the budget speech in the previous year. As evidenced in Table 7.1, the key moments of divergence from previous budget speeches are seen in the Gorton government's first budget speech in 1968 and the Gorton government's final budget speech in 1970, the Whitlam government's final budget speech saw a significant shift in 1975, and again with the Fraser government's first budget speech in 1976.

### 7.3.3 Governor General speeches

Mann–Whitney tests were then conducted to test for differences between governments from 1966 to 1978 in proportion of attention in Governor General speeches. One significant difference was detected between the speeches with the Whitlam government allocating a higher proportion of attention to environment ( $Mdn = 5.50$ ), than the Holt, Gorton and McMahon era ( $Mdn = 2.5$ ),  $W_s = 10$ ,  $z = -1.97$ ,  $p = .047$ .

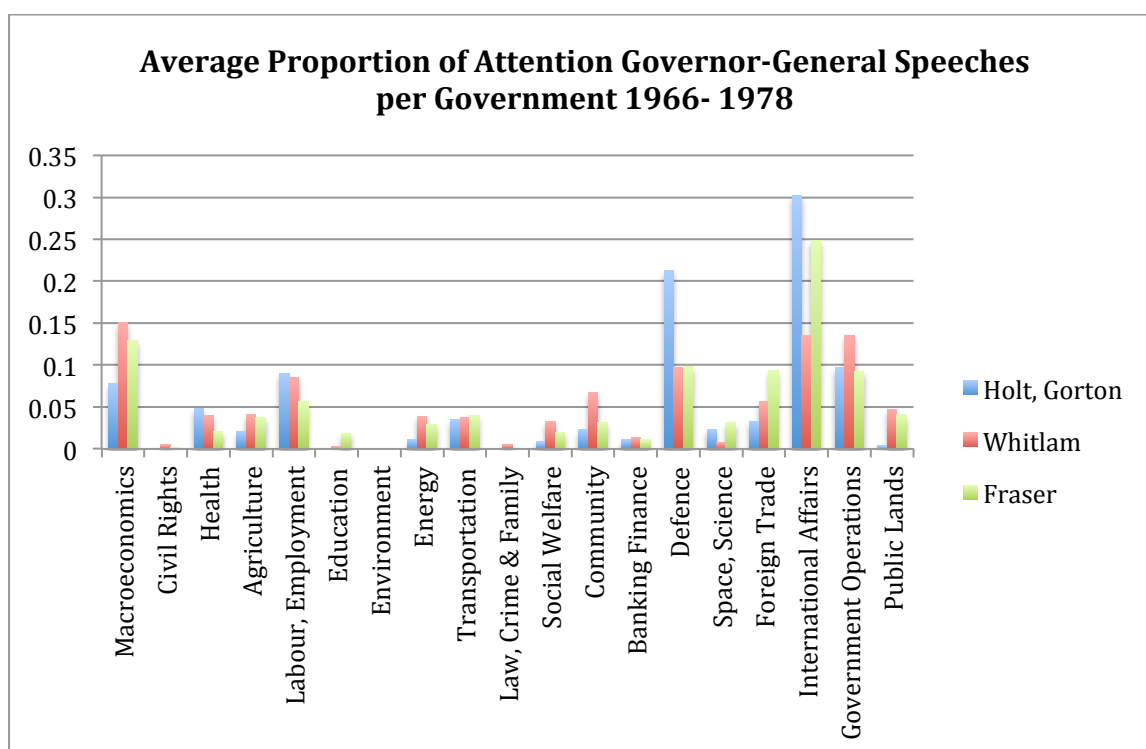
#### 7.3.4 Agenda-stability measure

Following Siegelman and Buell's (2004) measure of agenda stability, issue compositions of government agendas in Governor General speeches between 1966 and 1978 were as presented in Table 7.2:

**Table 7.2: Agenda Stability in Governor General Speeches 1966–1978**

Year	Stability
1968	73.04
1970	74.51
1973	76.25
1974	76.92
1976	78.17
1977	72.52
1978	76.40

Both the Governor General speeches and budget speeches of Whitlam show a re-ordered set of priorities in the policy-agenda items and the proportion of attention they receive. The results of the tests here demonstrate double the incidence of statistically significant differences under Whitlam when compared to the governments that preceded and followed his than were identified in the Howard analysis. In twelve budget speeches and four Governor General speeches in the Howard era only four significant differences could be found between Howard and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. In the Whitlam analysis of 3 budget speeches and 2 Governor General speeches, 8 significant differences emerge between the Whitlam government and the governments that precede and followed it. The PAP has demonstrated that Whitlam's time in office is clearly different from the governments that preceded and followed it.



**Figure 7.2: Average Proportion of Attention in Governor General Speeches 1966–1978**

## 7.4 Punctuations

As presented in Table 7.3, over the period from 1966 to 1978, there are 11 occasions where major policy punctuations occur in Governor General speeches, with seven of these occurring under the Whitlam government. It is interesting to note that in Dowding, Hindmoor, Iles and John's study of Governor General speeches from 1945 to 2008, only 18 occasions were identified in which attention increased by more than 250% between the two speeches.<sup>441</sup>

**Table 7.3: Punctuations in Governor General Speeches 1966–1978**

Percentage Change (%)	Topic	Year	Prime Minister
944	Community Development	1973	Whitlam
659	Civil Rights	1973	Whitlam
570	Social Welfare	1967	Holt
520	Energy	1974	Whitlam
431	Space, Science and Technology	1974	Whitlam
428	Civil Rights	1977	Fraser
428	Community Development	1977	Fraser
418	Transportation	1970	Gorton
415	Community Development	1974	Whitlam
374	Social Welfare	1973	Whitlam
317	Labour	1973	Whitlam

<sup>441</sup> K. Dowding, A. Hindmoor, R. Iles and P. John, 'Policy Agendas in Australian Politics: The Governor General's Speeches 1945–2000', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2010, p. 546.

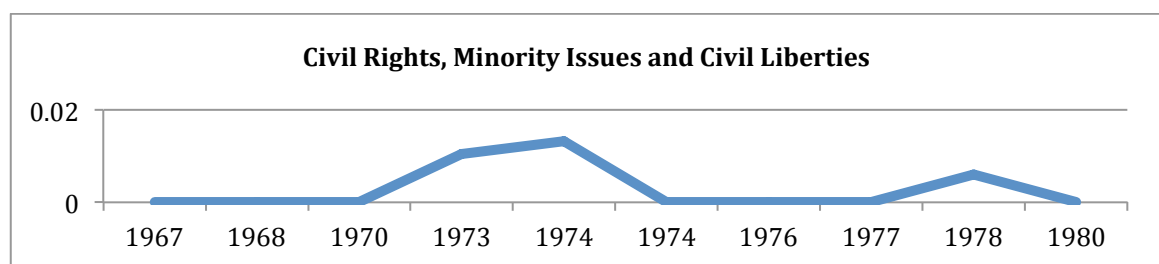
**Table 7.4: Budget Speeches: Policy Position on the Agenda in Budget Speeches 1966–1978**

Policy Issue	Holt, Gorton and McMahon ranking in importance of proportion of attention gained	Whitlam ranking in importance in proportion of attention gained	Fraser ranking in importance in proportion of attention gained
Macroeconomics	1	1	1
Civil Rights	18	19	19
Health	8	4	9
Agriculture	4	10	7
Labour	7	9	4
Education	6	5	10
Environment	17	17	18
Energy	16	11	5
Transportation	10	3	8
Law, Crime	19	18	17
Social Welfare	2	7	3
Community Development	11	2	11
Banking, Finance	9	12	6
Defence	3	8	13
Space, Science	15	16	14
Foreign Trade	14	14	12
International Affairs	12	15	16
Government Operations	5	6	2
Public Lands	13	13	15

Table 7.4 considers the order of priorities demonstrated by the proportion of the agenda particular policy areas receive. While all governments here allocate the majority of their attention to macroeconomics and their lowest levels of attention to Civil rights, environment, law, crime and family, there are interesting departures in the priority in the agenda afforded to various policy issues. For example, under Whitlam, there is a prioritisation of health, energy, transportation and community development. Policy issues such as agriculture, social welfare, defence, and banking and finance receive a lower priority in Whitlam's agenda.

The order of Whitlam's priorities is different and it is important to note that his government paid attention to policy areas that had not been prioritised in the governments of Holt, Gorton and Fraser. For example, Table 7.4 demonstrates that macroeconomics remains the most highly prioritised policy area by all governments analysed here, and receives the highest proportion of attention of any of the policy areas. However, the differences become clear when considering there had been no attention at all paid to civil rights under Holt or Gorton's governments. As evidenced in Figure 7.3, while civil rights did not receive a large proportion of attention in his agenda, Whitlam paid attention to this policy area for the first time during the period analysed here. Fraser

also paid some attention to this policy area, but not until his third Governor General speech and only at half the proportion of Whitlam. The Whitlam government introduced a range of reforms in this policy area, including the introduction of the *Racial Discrimination Act*, making it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of their ethnicity or to incite others to discriminate; the introduction of the *Commonwealth Electoral Act*, lowering the voting age from 21 to 18; and passing the *Death Penalty Abolition Act*, abolishing the death penalty for federal crimes. Whitlam argued that ‘Capital punishment is just as barbaric and inexcusable in the hands of States as it is in the hands of individuals. As we know, it barbarises and unsettles the executioners themselves’. There was also a priority attached to adopting international agreements as a way of delivering human-rights protections and a number of human-rights agreements ratified by the Whitlam government. These include the 1953 Covenant on the Political Rights of Women, the 1954 Convention Relating to the Statues of Stateless Persons, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and a range of International Labour Organisation conventions protecting the rights of workers.<sup>442</sup>



**Figure 7.3: Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties Proportion of Attention 1966–1978**

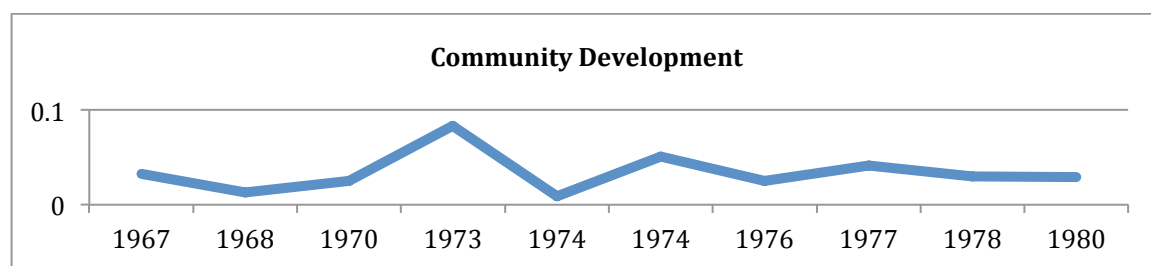
Community development is another policy area to which the Whitlam government allocated a larger proportion of its agenda than the other governments considered here. It is clear from Figure 7.4 that while this policy issue receives a low proportion of attention from all governments, the Whitlam government prioritised it more highly than the others did. Much of the focus for the Whitlam government in this policy area resulted from its emphasis on creating affordable urban housing, signalled in Whitlam’s 1972 election campaign speech:

increasingly, a citizen’s real standard of living, the health of himself and his family, his children’s opportunities for education and self-improvement, his access to employment opportunities, his ability to enjoy

<sup>442</sup> More details about the Whitlam Government’s approach to international human-rights agreements are detailed in the Hon. Michael Kirby’s speech Whitlam as Internationalist delivered 25 February 2010 and accessed at [http://whitlam.org/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/123211/SPEECH\\_-\\_WHITLAM\\_LECTURE\\_-\\_25\\_FEBRUARY\\_2010.pdf](http://whitlam.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/123211/SPEECH_-_WHITLAM_LECTURE_-_25_FEBRUARY_2010.pdf).

the nation's resources for recreation or culture, his ability to participate in the decisions and actions of the community are determined not by his income, not by the hours he works, but by where he lives. This is why Labor believes that the national government must involve itself directly in cities. Practically every major national problem relates to cities. A national government which cuts itself off from responsibility for the nation's cities is cutting itself off from the nation's real life. A national government which has nothing to say about cities has nothing relevant or enduring to say about the nation or the nation's future.<sup>443</sup>

Once elected, the Whitlam government initiated and funded the renewal of inner-city areas, purchased a large parcel of land, preventing construction in Sydney's inner west, funded the restoration of homes and constructed new dwellings close to Sydney and Melbourne's central business district (CBD) to provide workers with low-cost accommodation to enable them to take advantage of job opportunities.<sup>444</sup> The National Sewerage Program was also introduced soon after the Whitlam government took office, with the allocation of AUD\$330 million.<sup>445</sup> Whitlam justified the expenditure stating that no 'other western nation has cities in which the incidence of urban sanitation is so primitive or so ludicrous as in the cities of Australia ... We are the most effluent nation in what Liberals call the free world'.<sup>446</sup>



**Figure 7.4: Community Development Proportion of Attention 1966–1978**

A further example can be seen in Figure 7.5 in the policy area of law, crime and family issues, which was also afforded more attention under the Whitlam government with its reforms to the availability of Legal Aid and the provision of these services across the community. The Attorney General described the purpose of the creation of Legal Aid as follows:

I see the role of the Australian Legal Aid Office as taking the law to the people who most need it. I want to see small unpretentious 'storefront' offices opened up in the suburbs of the cities and in country centres. I want them to be the kind of offices to which the ordinary man or woman faced with a legal problem will go as readily as he or she would go to the garage with an ailing motor car.<sup>447</sup>

<sup>443</sup> Cited at [http://whitlam.org/gough\\_whitlam/achievements/cities](http://whitlam.org/gough_whitlam/achievements/cities). Accessed 19 June, 2013.

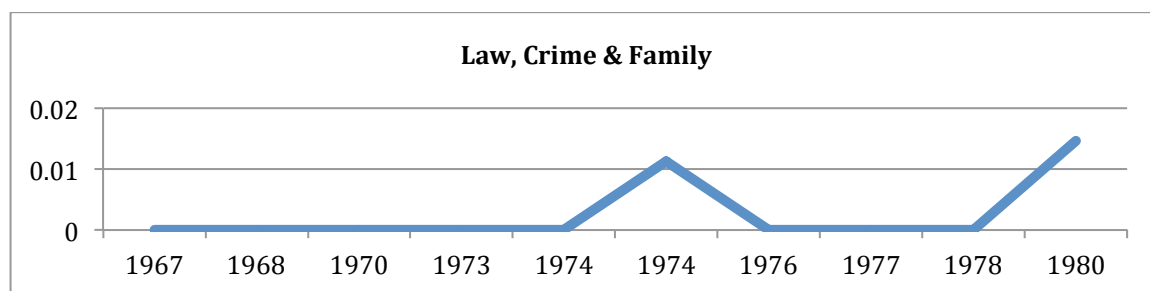
<sup>444</sup> For a more detailed account of many of the policies implemented see G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972–1975*, Ringwood, Viking, 1985, pp. 421–422.

<sup>445</sup> For further details of the program see P. Troy, *Innovation and Reaction: The Life and Death of the Federal Department of Urban and Regional Development*, Sydney, George Allen & Unwin, 1981, p. 187.

<sup>446</sup> Cited at [http://whitlam.org/gough\\_whitlam/achievements/cities](http://whitlam.org/gough_whitlam/achievements/cities). Accessed 19 June, 2013.

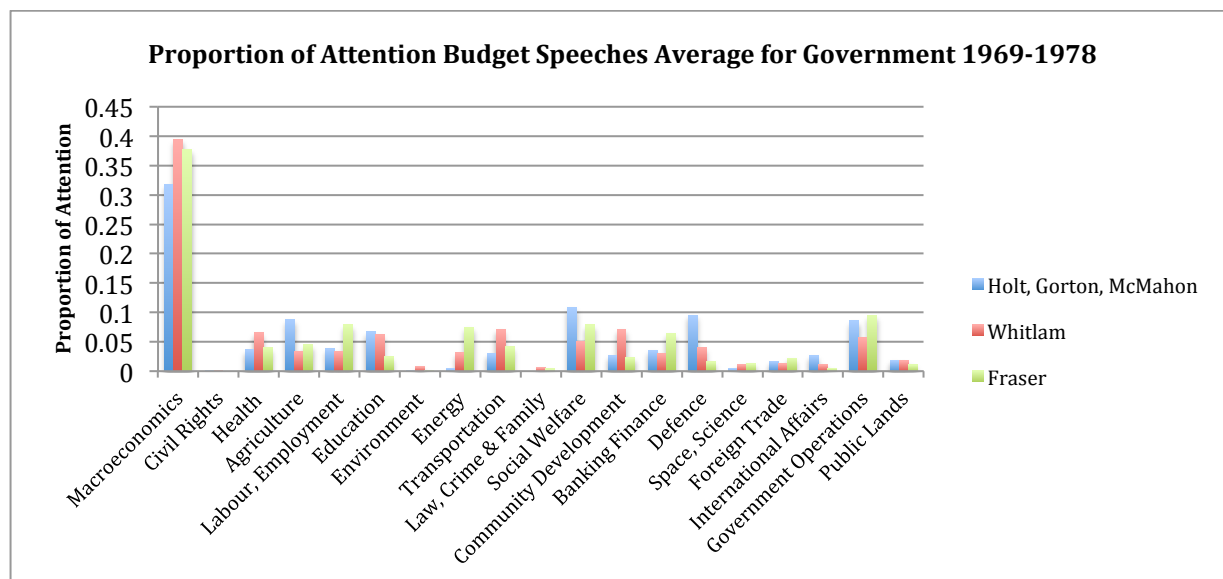
<sup>447</sup> Cited in G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972–1975*, p. 154.

Further reforms included the establishment of the Law Reform Commission to provide governments with recommendations of further law reform.<sup>448</sup>



**Figure 7.5: Law, Crime and Family Proportion of Attention 1966–1978**

The Whitlam years and the accompanying change in agenda are also seen in the budget speeches. When comparing the Whitlam governments of 1973, 1974 and 1975 to that of Holt, Gorton and McMahon from 1966 to 1972, and the Fraser governments of 1976 to 1978, the Whitlam period can be understood as pursuing a very different agenda in the proportion of its attention allocated to certain policy areas. For example, in Figure 7.6, it is clear that the areas of macroeconomics, health, agriculture, environment, energy, transportation, law, crime and family, social welfare, community development, defence and government operations receive different levels of attention in the agenda than under the previous and subsequent Liberal governments. That is, 11 of the 19 policy areas show a distinctly different set of priorities and agenda under Whitlam than under the Holt, Gorton, McMahon and Fraser governments that preceded and followed it.



**Figure 7.6: Proportion of Attention Budget Speeches: Average for Governments 1966–1978**

<sup>448</sup> Details on the establishment of the Commission and its role can be seen at <http://www.alrc.gov.au>.

As with the Governor General speeches, there are also policy issues in the budget speeches that received attention under Whitlam that had not been prioritised by the Holt, Gorton or McMahon governments, for example, civil rights, environment, transportation, law, crime and family issues, and community development. The increases in the proportion of attention are necessarily accompanied by decreases in attention in policy areas that had been prioritised under Holt, Gorton and McMahon, for example, agriculture, defence and government operations. This reveals a very different set of policy issues pursued under Whitlam than under the Liberal governments analysed here.

**Table 7.5: Major Policy Punctuations in Budget Speeches 1966–1978**

Percentage Change (%)	Topic	Year	Prime Minister
3482	Health	1967	Holt
618	Public Lands	1975	Whitlam
476	Government Operations	1969	Gorton
410	Foreign Trade	1976	Fraser
403	Law, Crime and Family	1973	Whitlam
402	Space, Science and Technology	1975	Whitlam
401	Labour, Employment and Immigration	1976	Fraser
385	Transportation	1969	Gorton
269	International Affairs	1973	Whitlam
264	Foreign Trade	1968	Gorton
263	International Affairs	1969	Gorton
259	Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce	1975	Whitlam
258	Public Lands	1967	Holt

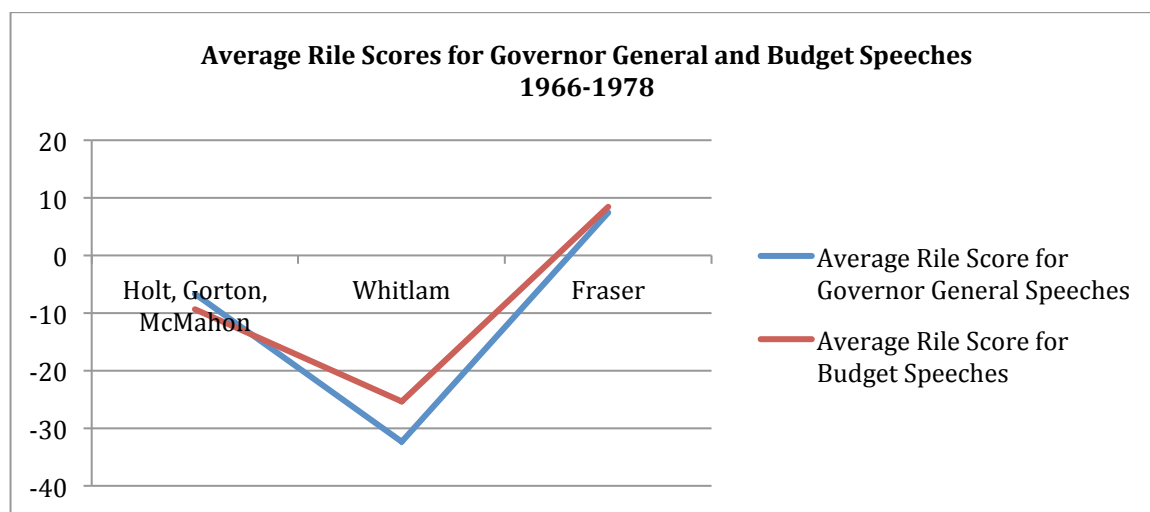
As seen in Table 7.5, five of the 13 major policy punctuations that occurred in budget speeches from 1966 to 1978 occur during the Whitlam government. There were also many other relatively large changes in proportion of attention levels that occurred under Whitlam, but these were slightly less than the 250% used here to identify policy punctuations, for example, 212% change in community development in 1973, and 232% in social welfare in 1975.

## 7.5 Comparative Manifestos Analysis

Given the different ordering of priorities demonstrated by the PAP analysis, it is also useful to consider the ideological position of the Whitlam government. The Whitlam government, using the CMP coding system, is also shown to be ideologically very different from the governments that preceded and followed it. Unsurprisingly, the Whitlam government is positioned much further to the left than governments led by Holt, Gorton and McMahon. The Fraser government is positioned furthest to the right of the governments analysed here. The Rile Scores resulting from the CMP



analysis of both Governor General speeches and budget speeches have produced highly consistent results as evidenced in Figure 7.7.



**Figure 7.7: Average Rile Scores for Governor General and Budget Speeches 1966–1978**

This analysis finds that the Whitlam government constituted a disruption in the policy agenda in Australia. His government was ideologically positioned further to the left than any other government analysed here. It is not unexpected to find that the Whitlam government prosecuted a different agenda from that of Holt, Gorton, McMahon and Fraser. However, it does raise some policy issues that challenge the perceptions and prevailing history and literature that are worthy of further investigation. One example is in the area of international relations in which there is a mythology surrounding the Whitlam government as moving Australia into the modern era, beginning with Australia's independent approach to foreign policy, trade and defence. While this is not an uncontested assertion, with some scholars, notably Jones and Smith pointing to this as being a simplistic and inaccurate portrayal of Whitlam's predecessors, Whitlam's reputation in this area persists.<sup>449</sup> The data here supports Jones and Smith's argument that the Whitlam government was no more active in this area than the other governments analysed. In fact, this data demonstrates his government devoting proportionally less of its political agenda to this area than its predecessors.

However, the focus of this chapter is to determine whether the PAP coding system is able to detect change in the Australian political agenda and this change has clearly been mapped and illustrated here.

<sup>449</sup> D.M. Jones and M. Smith, 'Misreading Menzies and Whitlam: Reassessing the Ideological Construction of Foreign Policy, *Round Table*, vol. 355, p. 387.

## 7.6 The United Kingdom Case

As outlined earlier, Blair was Prime Minister of England (from May 1997 to June 2007) for the majority of the period that Howard was the Prime Minister of Australia. Howard was Prime Minister of Australia from March 1996 to December 2007. Blair led the Labour Party in England, while Howard led the Liberal Party in Australia. As such, one would expect them to have pursued very different agendas. However, the Howard government came to office after a long period of Labor government, while the Blair government came to office after a long period of Conservative rule. To establish whether the policy agenda of the Blair government can be considered different and to test the PAP's capacity to detect shifts in agenda, the following period and governments are analysed:

- Margaret Thatcher (Conservative): 1979–1990
- John Major (Conservative): 1990–1997
- Tony Blair (Labour): 1997–2007
- Gordon Brown (Labour): 2007–2008

Thatcher was the longest serving Prime Minister of England in 150 years, and the first female British Prime Minister. Her government implemented what many consider a radical programme that included privatisation and deregulation, tax cuts, trade-union reforms and a focus on reducing the role of government. Major succeeded Thatcher as leader of the Conservative Party and as Prime Minister held office during Britain's longest period of continuous economic growth. He also began relationships with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to attempt to end the conflict in Northern Ireland. He won the election of 1992, with the Conservatives winning the highest number of popular votes in history, which many attribute to the reversal of the unpopular poll tax.

Blair won the election in 1997 with a large majority returning the Labour Party to office after 18 years in opposition. Under Blair, the Labour Party won three elections, with Blair becoming the longest serving Labour Prime Minister. He was also the youngest Prime Minister since 1812, and held office longer than anyone in the twentieth century other than Thatcher.<sup>450</sup> Among Blair's achievements are his oversight of the Northern Ireland peace process, public-sector reforms, Scottish and Welsh devolution, and the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act and the Human Rights Act. He was in office during the 9/11 2001 attacks in the United States, as well as the 7 July suicide bombings in London.

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<sup>450</sup> T. Casey, *The Blair Legacy: Politics, Policy, Governance and Foreign Affairs*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 3.

Blair left office on 27 June 2007 and was succeeded by Brown. Brown oversaw the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and the world's first Climate Change Act, which was implemented in 2008. Brown was also Prime Minister during the global financial crisis and the recession that followed.

Blair began as a highly popular Prime Minister with both the media and the public. Existing scholarly assessments of the Blair government are mixed, with some commentators considering Blair's important legacies as the involvement in the Iraq War, constitutional amendments and public-sector reform,<sup>451</sup> while others argue that policy changed only 'moderately' under Blair compared to the previous governments of Thatcher and Major.<sup>452</sup> For some commentators, the Blair government continued the neo-liberal policies of the Conservatives, thus betraying social democracy.<sup>453</sup> While the Blair government's legacy is contested, understanding the nature of its legacy is not the purpose of this analysis. The purpose here is to verify whether there is a detectable change in the policy agenda under the Blair government in the United Kingdom to test further PAP's capacity to map change.

## 7.7 Data and Method

To undertake this analysis, data sets have been formed from the Speeches from the Throne and Acts of Parliament available through the United Kingdom PAP. This analysis applies the policy-content coding system of PAP to consider persistence in content of the agenda during the period 1979 to 2008 in the United Kingdom, and to verify whether PAP captures differences in attention to specific policy areas and the overall scope and diversity of attention of the Blair government agenda.

The Speech from the Throne in the United Kingdom is a formal expression of the executive agenda and can be understood as a measure of a government's attention, and as a platform for setting the national agenda and ordering policy priorities. Acts of Parliament are a manifestation of where a government has focused its attention, and as such, constitute an important indicator of a government's agenda. Combined, these data sources produce a useful, if incomplete, basis for understanding and comparing governments and their agendas and priorities.

While the adoption of the PAP coding system provides a consistent mechanism to enable comparisons to occur, there are two procedural differences that affect the analysis here. The first occurs in the category of law, crime and family. This is a policy area that attracts a much greater

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<sup>451</sup> V. Bogdanor, 'The Historic Legacy of Tony Blair', *Current History*, vol. 106, 2007, pp. 99–105.

<sup>452</sup> G. Wilson, 'A Blair Era? The Political Order of Modern Britain', *The Forum*, vol. 5, no. 3, Article 2., 2007, available at <http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol5/iss3/art2>.

<sup>453</sup> S. Hall, 'Will Life After Blair Be Different?', *British Politics*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, pp. 118–122.

proportion of attention in the United Kingdom than in Australia during the period examined here in both speeches and legislation. This policy area is one that Blair lists as one of his major achievements while in government due to the provision of additional police in England and Wales, and a corresponding focus and reduction in the rates of crime. In Australia, policing, apart from the federal police, is a responsibility of the states and therefore, this structural difference between the two systems produces different priorities for governments.

However, this chapter is not making direct comparisons between the United Kingdom and Australian governments at this time, therefore these differences, while important, do not have any effect on this analysis. The coding decisions and sub-topic allocation of codes are completely consistent within each discrete section of the analysis.

The second difference arises from a choice taken by the United Kingdom PAP to code immigration and refugee issues in the topic code of civil rights and minority issues. Elsewhere these issues are coded in the labour, employment and immigration topic code. As such, it is important to consider sub-topic codes when analysing this category to ensure mindfulness of the topics contained within each major topic code.

A further limitation of the analysis here is its reliance on the coding work of PAP in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom project has not continued to code Acts of Parliament past 2008. For the purpose of this analysis in this research, having the capacity to compare Blair and Brown with Cameron would have added a useful dimension in detecting and mapping agenda change under Blair. The effect of the availability of the data means that comparison only between Blair and Brown with Thatcher and Major can be executed. However, while these data are not complete, they are sufficient to provide evidence of agenda change from Thatcher and Major to Blair, and enables mapping and changes to be detected if they occur.

While there are limitations to the data and the choices made here, these limitations do not diminish the capacity of this analysis to achieve its objective to verify whether PAP has the capacity to measure and map policy changes, given it did not detect major agenda change under the Howard government. As such, this chapter captures arguments about the applicability of PAP in the Australian context, and more broadly, its capacity to contribute to making international comparisons to detect changing agenda priorities.

## **7.8 Results: Legislation**

### **7.8.1 Mann–Whitney test: testing differences between two independent groups**

Mann–Whitney tests were used to test differences between governments in Acts of Parliament (two groups created). There were significant differences between governments in eight policy areas: macroeconomics, agriculture, energy, transportation, law, community development,

banking, and land/territory. Tests were done between the Thatcher and Blair governments, as they were in government for a similar length of time. The same differences appeared. To determine whether this is a difference between Conservative and Labour governments, Major was also compared with Blair, with differences here only between transportation and foreign trade.

Mann–Whitney tests were conducted to test for differences between political parties in the attention paid to topics in United Kingdom legislation. Conservative governments allocate greater proportions of their agenda than Labour governments to the following areas: macroeconomics (Conservative *Mdn* = 18.50; Labour *Mdn* = 11.00),  $W_s = 132.00$ ,  $z = -2.33$ ,  $p = .020$ ; agriculture (Conservative *Mdn* = 19.25; Labour *Mdn* = 9.88),  $W_s = 118.50$ ,  $z = -2.95$ ,  $p = .003$ ; energy (Conservative *Mdn* = 20.31; Labour *Mdn* = 9.88),  $W_s = 118.50$ ,  $z = -2.95$ ,  $p = .003$ ; transportation (Conservative *Mdn* = 19.25; Labour *Mdn* = 8.29),  $W_s = 99.50$ ,  $z = -3.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ; law (Conservative *Mdn* = 18.17; Labour *Mdn* = 11.50),  $W_s = 138.00$ ,  $z = -2.05$ ,  $p = .041$ ; community development (Conservative *Mdn* = 18.75; Labour *Mdn* = 10.63),  $W_s = 127.50$ ,  $z = -2.51$ ,  $p = .012$ ; banking (Conservative *Mdn* = 18.78; Labour *Mdn* = 10.58),  $W_s = 127.00$ ,  $z = -2.52$ ,  $p = .012$ ; and land/territory (Conservative *Mdn* = 18.8.; Labour *Mdn* = 10.50),  $W_s = 126.00$ ,  $z = -2.59$ ,  $p = .010$ .

The legislation of Thatcher and Blair were compared, as they spent similar lengths of time as Prime Minister. Mann–Whitney tests were again conducted. Thatcher legislation focused more frequently than Blair legislation on the following areas: macroeconomics (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.09; Blair *Mdn* = 7.60),  $W_s = 76.00$ ,  $z = -2.45$ ,  $p = .014$ ; agriculture (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.68; Blair *Mdn* = 6.95),  $W_s = 69.50$ ,  $z = -2.92$ ,  $p = .003$ ; energy (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.27; Blair *Mdn* = 7.40),  $W_s = 74.00$ ,  $z = -2.64$ ,  $p = .008$ ; transportation (Thatcher *Mdn* = 15.45; Blair *Mdn* = 6.10),  $W_s = 61.00$ ,  $z = -3.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ; community development (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.73; Blair *Mdn* = 6.90),  $W_s = 69.00$ ,  $z = -2.92$ ,  $p = .003$ ; banking (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.41; Blair *Mdn* = 7.25),  $W_s = 72.50$ ,  $z = -2.68$ ,  $p = .007$ ; and land/territory (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.18; Blair *Mdn* = 7.50),  $W_s = 75.00$ ,  $z = -2.51$ ,  $p = .012$ .

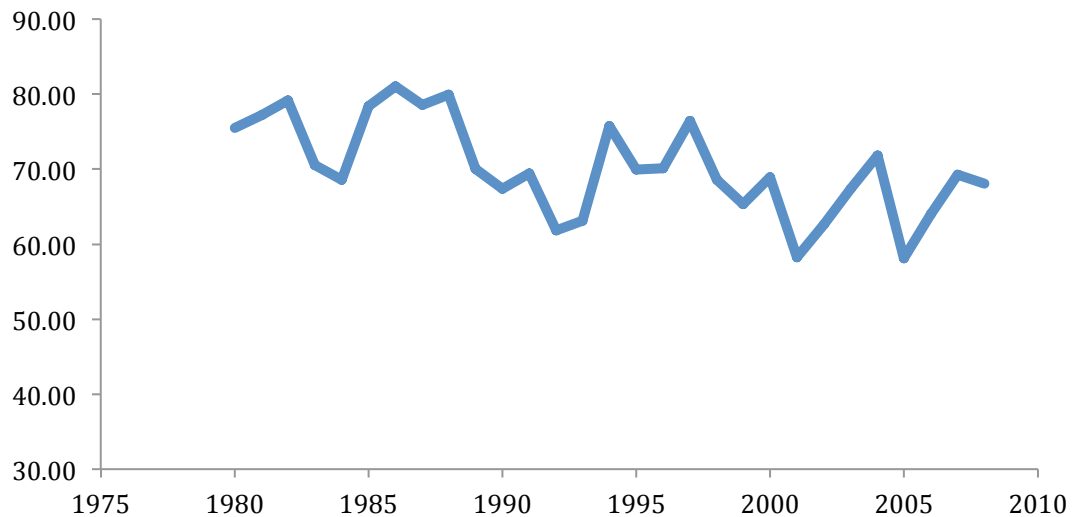
When Major was compared to Blair in legislation, significant differences were found in transportation (Major *Mdn* = 12.57; Blair *Mdn* = 6.50),  $W_s = 65.00$ ,  $z = -2.52$ ,  $p = .012$ ; and foreign trade (Major *Mdn* = 11.36; Blair *Mdn* = 7.35),  $W_s = 73.50$ ,  $z = -2.04$ ,  $p = .042$ .

#### 7.8.2 Agenda-stability measure

Following Siegelman and Buell's (2004) measure of agenda stability, issue compositions of government agendas in legislation between 1979 and 2008 were as presented in Table 7.6:

**Table 7.6: Agenda Stability in Legislation**

Year	Stability
1980	75.49
1981	77.21
1982	79.17
1983	70.53
1984	68.55
1985	78.44
1986	81.04
1987	78.59
1988	79.97
1989	70.00
1990	67.39
1991	69.44
1992	61.86
1993	63.16
1994	75.75
1995	69.92
1996	70.11
1997	76.40
1998	68.56
1999	65.31
2000	68.89
2001	58.22
2002	62.64
2003	67.42
2004	71.81
2005	58.11
2006	63.94
2007	69.27
2008	68.04



**Figure 7.8: Differences in Convergence Scores in Legislation**

A one-way ANOVA (see Figure 7.6) indicates that there are significant differences in convergence scores in legislation for both the Prime Minister:  $F(3) = 7.06, p < .001$ , and the party in power:  $F(1) = 8.38, p = .007$  at the time.

Follow-up tests were conducted between the governments to understand which Prime Ministers significantly differed from each other in convergence scores. Independent groups t-tests indicated that Thatcher and Major convergence scores were significantly different:  $t(15) = 3.38, p = .004$ . Thatcher was also significantly different from Blair:  $t(18) = 4.21, p < .001$ , and was approaching significance in difference from Brown:  $t(10) = 2.16, p = .056$ . When Major was compared to Blair and Brown, the differences in convergence scores were not significantly different. Neither were Blair and Brown convergence scores significantly different.

## 7.9 Results: Speeches from the Throne

Mann–Whitney tests were conducted to test for differences between governments in frequency of topic mentions in Speeches from the Throne. Conservative parties devote higher proportions of their agendas to the following areas than Labour parties: macroeconomics (Conservative  $Mdn = 19.28$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 9.83$ ),  $W_s = 118.00, z = -2.91, p = .004$ ; agriculture (Conservative  $Mdn = 18.72$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 10.67$ ),  $W_s = 128.00, z = -2.60, p = .009$ ; defence (Conservative  $Mdn = 20.89$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 7.42$ ),  $W_s = 89.00, z = -4.13, p < .001$ ; international affairs (Conservative  $Mdn = 19.03$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 10.21$ ),  $W_s = 122.50, z = -2.70, p = .007$ ; and land/territory (Conservative  $Mdn = 20.94$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 7.33$ ),  $W_s = 88.00, z = -4.19, p < .001$ .

Labour parties allocate higher proportions of attention than conservative parties to the following areas: civil rights (Conservative  $Mdn = 12.72$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 19.67$ ),  $W_s = 229.00, z = -2.16, p = .030$ ; health (Conservative  $Mdn = 9.67$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 24.25$ ),  $W_s = 174.00, z = -4.53, p < .001$ ; environment (Conservative  $Mdn = 12.00$ ; Labour  $Mdn = 20.75$ ),  $W_s = 216.00, z = -2.75, p = .007$ .

.006; law (Conservative *Mdn* = 11.33; Labour *Mdn* = 21.75),  $W_s = 204.00$ ,  $z = -3.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ; community development (Conservative *Mdn* = 12.69; Labour *Mdn* = 19.71),  $W_s = 228.50$ ,  $z = -2.24$ ,  $p = .025$ ; and government operations (Conservative *Mdn* = 10.53; Labour *Mdn* = 22.96),  $W_s = 189.50$ ,  $z = -3.83$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The Speeches from the Throne while Thatcher and Blair were Prime Minister were then compared. Mann–Whitney tests were again conducted. Speeches from the Throne while Thatcher was Prime Minister allocated a higher proportion of attention than Blair in Speeches from the Throne in the following areas: macroeconomics (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.36; Blair *Mdn* = 7.30),  $W_s = 73.00$ ,  $z = -2.63$ ,  $p = .009$ ; agriculture (Thatcher *Mdn* = 14.73; Blair *Mdn* = 6.90),  $W_s = 69.00$ ,  $z = -3.00$ ,  $p = .003$ ; defence (Thatcher *Mdn* = 15.36; Blair *Mdn* = 6.20),  $W_s = 62.00$ ,  $z = -3.42$ ,  $p = .001$ ; government operations (Thatcher *Mdn* = 7.09; Blair *Mdn* = 15.30),  $W_s = 78.00$ ,  $z = -3.05$ ,  $p = .002$ ; and land/territory (Thatcher *Mdn* = 15.64; Blair *Mdn* = 5.90),  $W_s = 59.00$ ,  $z = -3.63$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Speeches from the Throne while Blair was Prime Minister devoted higher proportions of attention than Thatcher to the following areas: health (Thatcher *Mdn* = 6.18; Blair *Mdn* = 16.30),  $W_s = 68.00$ ,  $z = -3.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ; environment (Thatcher *Mdn* = 8.55; Blair *Mdn* = 13.70),  $W_s = 94.00$ ,  $z = -1.96$ ,  $p = .009$ ; law (Thatcher *Mdn* = 6.36; Blair *Mdn* = 16.10),  $W_s = 70.00$ ,  $z = -3.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and social welfare (Thatcher *Mdn* = 11.28; Blair *Mdn* = 21.83),  $W_s = 85.50$ ,  $z = -2.57$ ,  $p = .010$ .

When Major, was compared to Blair in Speeches from the Throne, Major allocated more attention than Blair to the following areas: defence (Major *Mdn* = 13.93; Blair *Mdn* = 5.55),  $W_s = 55.50$ ,  $z = -3.42$ ,  $p = .001$ ; and land/territory (Major *Mdn* = 13.14; Blair *Mdn* = 6.10),  $W_s = 65.00$ ,  $z = -2.52$ ,  $p = .012$ ;

Speeches from the Throne when Blair was Prime Minister saw Blair allocating a higher proportion of attention than Major to the following areas: health (Major *Mdn* = 4.14; Blair *Mdn* = 12.40),  $W_s = 29.00$ ,  $z = -3.37$ ,  $p = .001$ ; environment (Major *Mdn* = 5.79; Blair *Mdn* = 11.25),  $W_s = 40.50$ ,  $z = -2.27$ ,  $p = .023$ ; law (Major *Mdn* = 4.43; Blair *Mdn* = 12.20),  $W_s = 31.00$ ,  $z = -3.13$ ,  $p = .002$ ; social welfare (Major *Mdn* = 5.79; Blair *Mdn* = 11.25),  $W_s = 40.50$ ,  $z = -2.23$ ,  $p = .026$ ; community development (Major *Mdn* = 5.64; Blair *Mdn* = 11.35),  $W_s = 39.50$ ,  $z = -2.41$ ,  $p = .016$ ; and international affairs (Major *Mdn* = 12.21; Blair *Mdn* = 6.75),  $W_s = 67.50$ ,  $z = -2.20$ ,  $p = .028$ ; government operations (Major *Mdn* = 4.57; Blair *Mdn* = 12.10),  $W_s = 32.00$ ,  $z = -3.04$ ,  $p = .012$ .

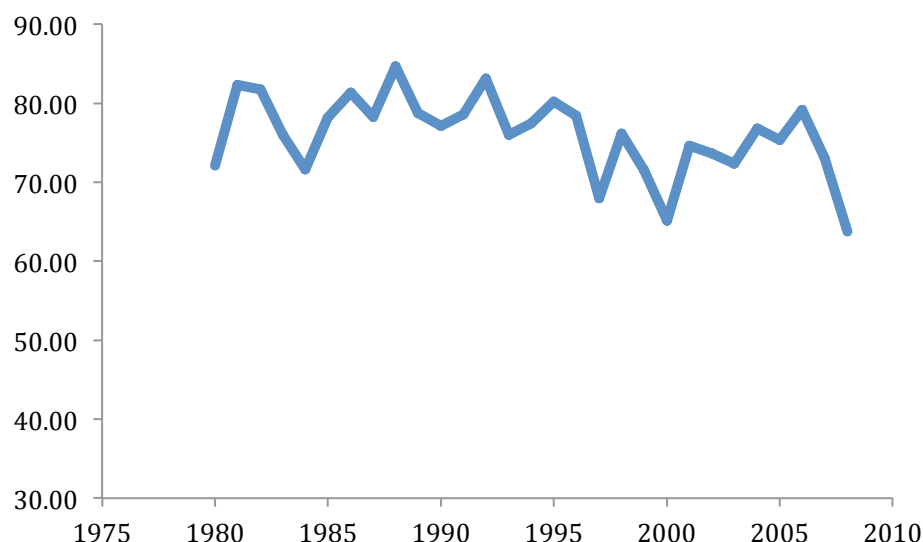
#### 7.9.1 Agenda-stability measure

Following Siegelman and Buell's (2004) measure of agenda stability, issue compositions of Speeches from the Throne between 1979 and 2008 were as presented in Table 7.7:



**Table 7.7: Agenda Stability in Speeches from the Throne**

Year	Stability
1980	72.06
1981	82.28
1982	81.72
1983	76.02
1984	71.61
1985	78.16
1986	81.35
1987	78.25
1988	84.67
1989	78.71
1990	77.12
1991	78.61
1992	83.15
1993	75.96
1994	77.46
1995	80.20
1996	78.41
1997	68.00
1998	76.14
1999	71.54
2000	65.14
2001	74.59
2002	73.64
2003	72.32
2004	76.82
2005	75.37
2006	79.18
2007	73.05
2008	63.72



**Figure 7.9: Difference in Convergence Scores in Speeches from the Throne**

A one-way ANOVA indicates that there are significant differences in convergence scores in Speeches from the Throne, for both the Prime Ministers:  $F(3) = 6.26$ ,  $p = .003$ , and the party in power:  $F(1) = 16.02$ ,  $p < .001$  at the time.

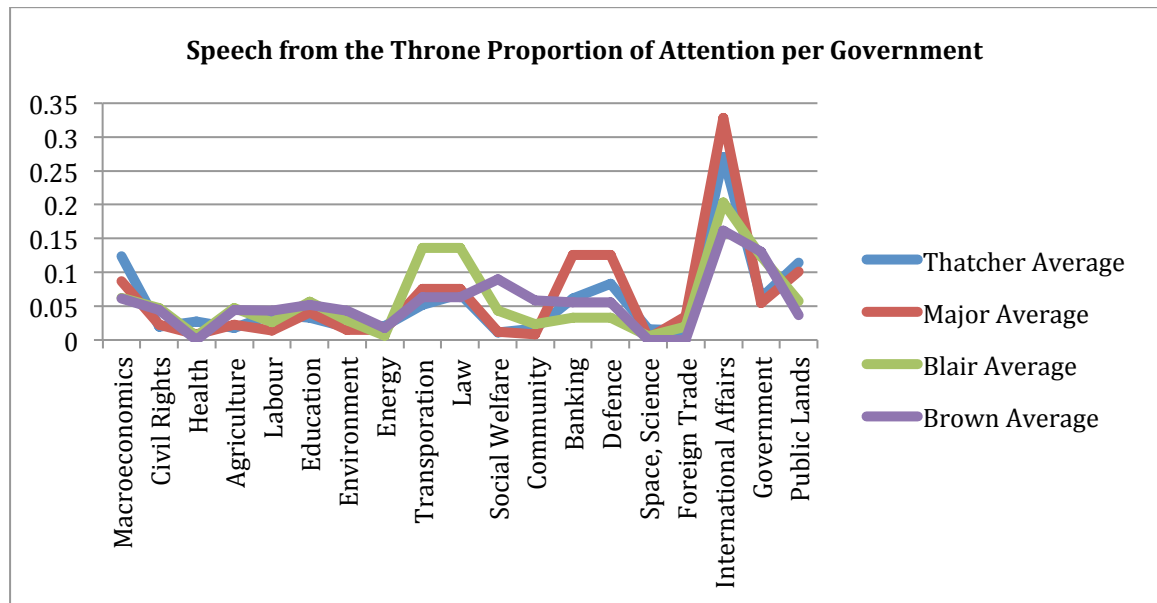
Follow-up tests were conducted to understand which Prime Ministers significantly differed from each other in convergence scores. Independent groups t-tests indicated that there were no significant differences in convergence scores between Thatcher and Major. However, Thatcher's convergence scores were significantly different from Blair's,  $t(18) = 2.74$ ,  $p = .014$ , and Brown's,  $t(10) = 2.85$ ,  $p = .017$ . Major's convergence scores were also significantly different from Blair's,  $t(15) = 3.07$ ,  $p = .008$ , and Brown's,  $t(7) = 3.87$ ,  $p = .006$ . There were no significant differences in convergence scores between Blair and Brown.

## 7.10 Analysis

As demonstrated in Figure 7.10, international affairs is the most dominant policy area for all the governments analysed here. While Blair and Brown allocate a smaller proportion of their agenda to this area than Thatcher and Major, it is still the issue that received the most attention across this period. Macroeconomics is also similarly prioritised in the agendas of all the governments here. However, Thatcher pays this policy area a higher proportion of attention than any of the other Prime Ministers, which is not surprising.

Figure 7.10 demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the policies these governments have chosen to prioritise, and therefore, in the structure of their agenda. Civil rights, education, transportation, law, social welfare and government operations received a far higher priority in Blair's agenda than in Thatcher's or Major's, while banking and finance, defence,

macroeconomics, health, labour, and employment receive a greater proportion of the agenda under Thatcher than under Blair.



**Figure 7.10: Speech from the Throne Proportion of Attention per Government**

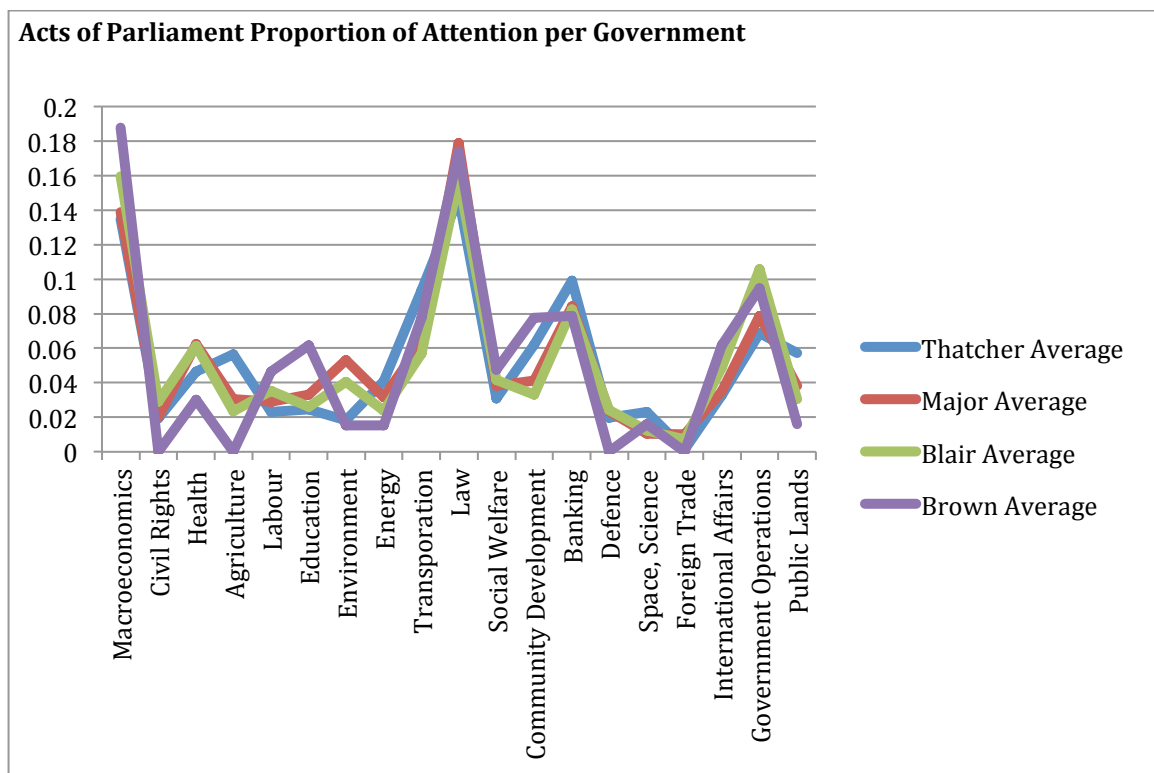
John and Jennings's conducted an analysis of Speeches from the Throne from 1940 to 2005 in which they consider a range of propositions about the nature of post-war British policy making. They conclude that the agenda broadens under the leadership of Blair, with a shift towards a more diversified agenda during this period. This finding is consistent with the analysis here.<sup>454</sup>

The analysis of the difference in the proportion of attention paid to different policy issues between the Blair government and the Thatcher and Major governments as revealed in Speeches from the Throne supports the argument that the Blair government's policy agenda was significantly different to that of the Thatcher and Major governments, with 17 significant differences. It is important to recall that in the analysis presented in Chapter 5 of the Howard government, only six significant differences could be found across three different measures.

An analysis of the agendas of British governments from 1979 to 2008 measured by data from the Acts of Parliament passed by each government reveals that the differences between Blair and the other governments was less dramatic than the differences found in the Speeches from the Throne. While there are greater similarities between these governments by this measurement than by the Speeches from the Throne, there were also nine areas of significant difference found.

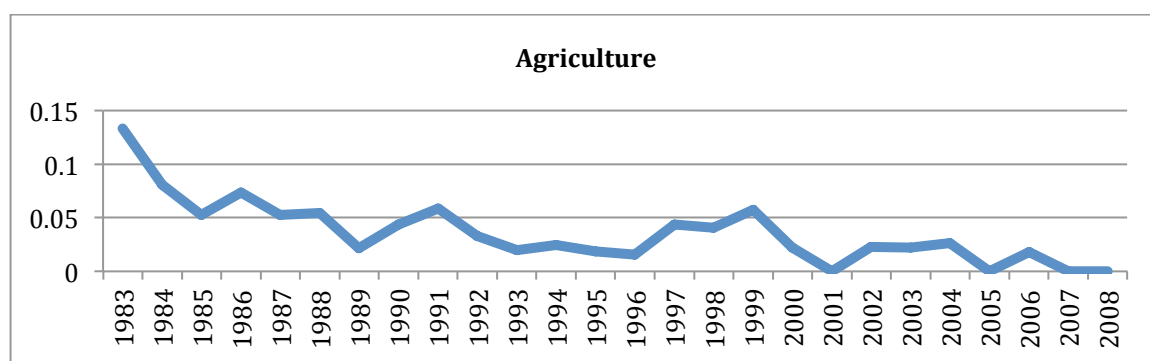
<sup>454</sup> P. John and W. Jennings, 'Punctuations and Turning Points in British Politics? The Policy Agenda of the Queen's Speech, 1940–2005', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2010, p. 585.

Acts of Parliament, as can be seen in Figure 7.11 below, reveal different information to what is revealed in Speeches from the Throne due to the nature of legislation. Once legislation has been passed in a particular policy area, there is not always a requirement to pass further legislation, which means that over time, more sporadic levels of attention are found in Acts of Parliament than in speeches from the Throne. This is to be expected. However, Acts of Parliament are important to analyse because they provide a necessary cross-check for the rhetoric of the Speeches from the Throne. Acts of Parliament demonstrate the practical outcome of attention to particular policy areas, and the commitment and allocation of resources by government.



**Figure 7.11: Acts of Parliament: Proportion of Attention per Government 1979–2008**

While it is important to examine change and the size of the change that occurs in specific policy areas, it is also important to consider long-term trends in policy areas. For example, in Acts of Parliament, it is clear in Figure 7.12 that agriculture is trending down in the proportion of attention it receives over time. As such, the notion that Blair paid less attention to this policy area than those that preceded him is in accordance with a longer term trend, and is also consistent with the trend in Australia at the time.



**Figure 7.12: Proportion of Attention to Agriculture in Speeches from the Throne 1979–2009**

An examination of the policy punctuations (see Table 7.8) in the legislation data also provides insight, revealing four policy punctuations under Thatcher and three under Blair during this period

**Table 7.8: Major Policy Punctuations in Acts of Parliament in the United Kingdom 1979–2008**

Percentage Change (%)	Topic	Year	Prime Minister
680	Social Welfare	1991–1992	Major
481	Community Development	1983–1984	Thatcher
440	International Affairs	2000–2001	Blair
260	Social Welfare	2000–2001	Blair
259	Education	1988–1989	Thatcher
259	Public Lands	1988–1989	Thatcher
259	Environment	1992–1993	Major
254	Community Development	2006–2007	Blair
253	Agriculture	1979–1980	Thatcher

During the period analysed here there are nine policy punctuations evidenced. Table 7.9 below presents the percentage changes greater than 250%. Including this analysis when considering agenda change enables the understanding of the relative size of change, rather than only the positioning of a particular policy issue as a priority on the political agenda at a given point in time.

**Table 7.9: Major Policy Punctuations in Speeches from the Throne 1979–2008**

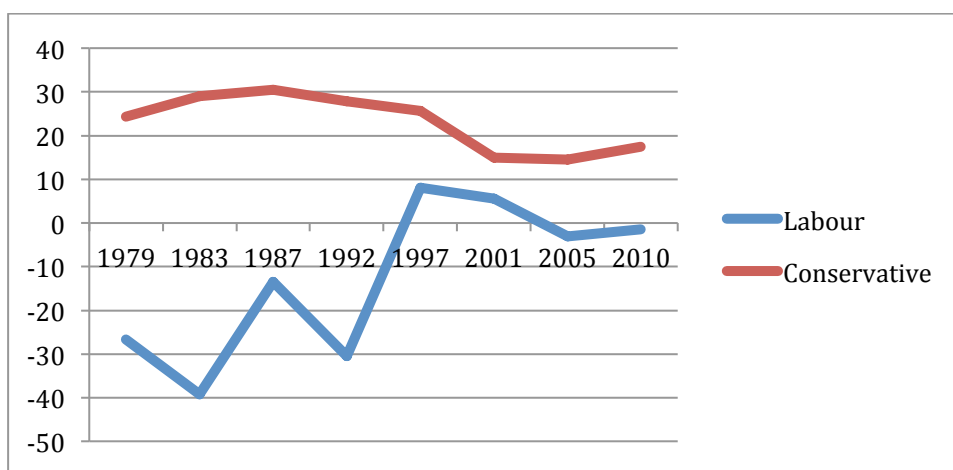
Percentage Change (%)	Topic	Year	Prime Minister
458	Health	1999/2000	Blair
458	Community Development	1999/2000	Blair
415	Education	1986/1987	Thatcher
367	Environment	1988/1989	Thatcher
281	Civil Rights	1998/1999	Blair
264	Education	1978/79	Thatcher
264	Space, Science & Technology	1978/79	Thatcher
262	Labour, Employment	2004/2005	Blair
259	Government Operations	1987/1988	Thatcher

Four major policy punctuations occur under Blair in 1998–1999 in the area of civil rights; two the following year in housing and health, and two in 2004–2005 in the area of labour and employment policy. The other five punctuations occurred under Thatcher in 1987–1988 in government operations, two in 1978–1979 in the areas of space, science and technology, and education, in education again in 1986–1987, and in environment in 1988–1989. Johns and Jennings identify 27 major turning points in the Speeches from the Throne from 1940–2005, it is interesting that one-third of these occurred during the Prime Ministerships of Blair and Thatcher.

The findings of this analysis of the policy agenda in the United Kingdom from Thatcher to Brown concur with the findings of John and Jennings that the Blair leadership produced detectable change in the political agenda in Britain, with a rise in attention paid to policy areas such as health, education, and law and crime<sup>455</sup>. The data demonstrate that the Blair government focused on different policy issues and attributed different proportions of attention to policy issues than its predecessors and successors.

### 7.11 Comparative Manifestos: United Kingdom Analysis

Figure 7.13 presents coding data performed by CMP.<sup>456</sup> As mentioned, political parties in the United Kingdom regularly publish a manifesto, thereby eliminating the need for other documents to serve as proxies for coding for ideology. The data presented below detail a distinct shift to the right under Blair, but in his later terms there is a shift back to the left. It is clear that the Blair government is positioned to the left of the Conservative governments led by Thatcher and Major. This finding is consistent with the PAP data presented on the Blair government.



**Figure 7.13: Rile Scores: United Kingdom 1979–2008**

<sup>455</sup> P. John and W. Jennings, 'Punctuations and Turning Points in British Politics? – The Policy Agenda of the Queen's Speech, 1940–2005', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2010, pp. 561–586.

<sup>456</sup> The raw data can be accessed at <http://manifestoproject.wzb.eu> using manifestos for the Labour Party and Conservative Party from 1979, 1983, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2010.

## 7.12 Conclusion

The PAP coding of the budget speeches and Governor General speeches demonstrate significant policy-agenda change under the Whitlam government, which supports the dominant claims in the literature that the Whitlam government was transformational. The CMP coding also demonstrates the Whitlam government to be ideologically different from the Liberal governments that preceded and followed it. This demonstrates that PAP is able to capture change in policy priorities and that CMP is able to detect ideological difference. It can thus be concluded that if Howard had been the transformative figure that much of the literature claims he was, PAP would have revealed this transformation in its data.

The United Kingdom's analysis also demonstrates that PAP data revealed significant policy-agenda differences between Blair's government and the governments that preceded and followed it. This again provides evidence that PAP is able to detect and map changes in the policy agenda to reveal difference in political agendas.

PAP revealed a changed agenda under both the Whitlam and Blair governments that it did not with the Howard government. There were only four policy areas that showed a statistically significant difference in attention received under the Howard government in budget speeches when compared to the governments led by Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard. With Whitlam, there were eight policy areas of significant difference, and under Blair, there were 12. The analysis demonstrates that the Howard government did not depart radically from the policy agenda pursued by its predecessors.

This chapter confirms the capacity of PAP to detect and map change in policy agenda, thus, strengthening the argument of this research that the Howard government cannot be understood as constituting a turning point in Australian politics.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis has mapped Australia's policy agenda from 1983 to 2010 to identify how and to what extent the Howard government significantly changed Australia's policy agenda relative to the Labor governments that preceded and followed it. Using the measurement strategy detailed in Chapter 3, this research established the topics of public policy that the Hawke, Keating, Howard, Rudd and Gillard governments chose to focus on. We know whether these policy topics appeared in the agenda through their communication in Governor General speeches, budget speeches or as an Act of Parliament. When particular policy topics increased or decreased in importance over time changes in the policy agenda emerged. The analysis clearly demonstrates that the Howard government did not reshape Australia's policy agenda relative to its Labor predecessors and successors. As we saw in Chapter 7, Howard was no Whitlam or Blair.

This concluding chapter progresses in three steps. First, it recapitulates the key questions and findings of the research. Second, it revisits the two key coding systems used to undertake the analysis, their advantages and limits before pointing to an area for further research. The chapter concludes by discussing the contribution this research seeks to make to debates about the Howard government.

Three principle observations are made about the existing literature on the Howard government. They are that it is dualistic, polarising and at times vitriolic. Second, that the analysis of the Howard government is not holistic in its nature, it is limited to one of three categories: ideology and politics, economic policy or the social/cultural dimension of policy. Finally, most existing studies do not adopt a strong methodological focus or subject the Howard era to rigorous analytical or comparative work. Despite this, much of the literature portrays the Howard era as constituting a policy disruption, with many commentators arguing that the Howard government 'transformed Australian politics'.<sup>457</sup> For example, '...Howard has changed the nation in a way very few leaders ever do'<sup>458</sup>; '...the Howard years was an attempt to change the agenda (backwards from what it became in the Whitlam and Fraser years)'<sup>459</sup> and that Howard changed the country to an extent that was previously 'inconceivable'.<sup>460</sup> While some of the commentary is instructive, there is a great deal it does not reveal about the Howard government's policy agenda. This research has been driven by the suspicion that the period is more complex than much of the commentary and

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<sup>457</sup> R. Manne, 'Little America: How John Howard has Changed Australia', *The Monthly*, March 2006, p. 21.

<sup>458</sup> J. Albrechtsen, 'Pass Baton to Costell', Janet Albrechtsen's blog [web blog], 6 September 2007, <http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/janetalbrechtsen/index.php>, (accessed 19 January 2012).

<sup>459</sup> D. Horne, *Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*, Melbourne, Viking, 2001, p. 123.

<sup>460</sup> R. Manne, 'The Insider', 2009, p. 35.



caricatures suggest. As one of Australia's longest serving governments, it is clear that this period in Australia's political history deserves more precise consideration.

In order to overcome the shortcomings identified in the literature this research offers a distinctive perspective by introducing empirical measurement to the predominately non-quantitative literature. The differences and similarities in Howard's policy agenda to that of the governments that preceded and followed it, became clear. The analytical work provided the basis for comparative claims about the Howard government's transformative nature, how the agenda changed over time and so facilitated assessments about key changes in policy agenda.

As detailed in Chapter 3, the PAP is an important tool in examining and explaining the policy agenda. 11 Governor General speeches, 29 budget speeches and 4890 Acts of Parliament were coded and analysed for this research using the PAP's coding framework. The key findings of this analysis are that all governments analysed here: Hawke, Keating, Howard and Rudd/Gillard have chosen to prioritise the same set of policy topics. They have also chosen the same set of policy issues to exclude from the agenda. Significantly, not only have these governments prioritised the same policy topics but there is evidence that they afforded them similar proportions of their agenda. This is not to say that there were no differences. Six instances of statistically significant difference between the Howard government and the Labor governments that preceded and followed it were found. These differences occurred in the policy areas of: macroeconomics, health, energy, foreign trade and agriculture.

Macroeconomics dominated the policy agenda of all of the governments analysed from 1983 to 2011, receiving the highest proportion of government attention of any of the policy areas. The Howard government attributed a lower proportion of its attention to this topic than the Hawke government but interestingly, the Howard government was the only government to prioritise other policy areas more highly than macroeconomics in a budget speech. It happened on three occasions, 1999 where health was priorities more highly, 2002 with labour, employment and immigration and in 2004 where social welfare was accorded the highest priority.

Health policy was the only topic area where the Howard government was significantly different from the Labor governments in more than one measure, budget speeches and Acts of Parliament. The Howard government focused significantly more of its agenda on health than the Hawke or Keating governments on the topic of health in budget speeches. Acts of Parliament also saw the Howard government allocate a greater proportion of its agenda to health than the Hawke or Keating governments. Energy policy showed both the Keating and Rudd/Gillard governments allocated higher proportions of their attention in budget speeches than Howard to this topic but energy policy sees all governments allocate relatively low proportions of their agenda to this topic code. Foreign Trade received higher proportions of attention in budget speeches from the Hawke

and Keating governments than the Howard government but the attention to this policy area showed a decreasing trend over time. Agriculture is similar in that while there is difference between Howard and the other governments, the trend line over time is decreasing, with Hawke and Keating paying more attention than Howard and attention declining further under the Rudd/Gillard government.

The analysis of policy punctuations found that some of the largest punctuations during this period did not occur in the first term of a newly elected government as might be expected. Policy punctuations occurred more frequently during a government's second, third or fourth term. Policy punctuations in Howard's budget speeches show the largest punctuations occurring late in his time in office in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2007, showing that the Howard government differed greatest not from the Labor governments analysed here, but between the early and later terms of its time in office.

Many of the conclusions of scholars and commentators about the Howard government's transformative nature are not consistent with the results of the PAP analysis. This created two challenges for this research. The first was how best to explain the basis for many of the claims in the literature and the second is that these findings give rise to a potential argument that the reason change is not evident is not because the Howard government's policy agenda is predominately similar to the Labor governments but that the PAP is not able to detect or map change. The first of these challenges was dealt with by offering an alternative characterisation of the Howard era and to consider whether the Howard government may be better understood as an ideological punctuation. The methodological challenge that arose from this decision was how best to measure ideology in its relative spatial positioning of the governments and policy positions during this period, with the CMP scheme selected to achieve this aim.

The CMP systematically applies a quantitative technique to spatially represent or map ideological positions. Coding is scaled to create standardised scores thereby enabling comparisons of speeches and documents of different lengths. As a result of the statistical correlation between the categories, and a party being of the left or of the right, the CMP argues that the degree to which a speech places emphasis on categories can be understood as a measure of the degree to which the speech is ideologically left or right. The measure adopted, the Rile Scale, measures the frequency with which the categories are mentioned in the text. Fundamental to this exercise is the understanding that the determination of the spatial positioning is not calculating whether there is a majority or minority of left-wing or right-wing statements, but by the number of left-wing versus right-statements relative to all statements. While the CMP experiences widespread use it has been criticised for its lack of nuance in the way that it considers left-right dimensions. However the

simplicity of the system is the key to its scope and usage and has particular resonance for this project due to its consistency with Australia's two-party political polarisation.

The results of the analysis of Governor General speeches demonstrated that Howard was positioned differently from the Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments, ideologically. Budget speeches show Howard positioned very similarly to the Labor leaders analysed here. Governor General speeches see the Howard government positioned furthest to the right and Labor governments all positioned on the ideological left. It was expected that GG speeches would reflect a greater degree of consistency with party ideological positions as the speech is delivered at the beginning of a term and marks a government's intentions. The Howard government, however, was not positioned furthest to the ideological right in budget speeches. Little difference was evident in the positioning of Howard, Hawke and Rudd. Both Keating and Gillard are positioned further to the right than Howard in terms of budget speeches. What emerged from this analysis is that the Howard government is less consistent than the Labor governments in terms of its ideological positioning over time. For example, Howard's 2004 budget speech is positioned further to the left than any other budget speech while the 1997 budget speech was the speech positioned furthest to the right of any speech. There is a shift to the ideological left during the course of Howard's time in office.

Other findings that arose in the CMP analysis, the different position in Governor General speeches and budget speeches point to the inherent difficulty of converting intention to policy. This distinction between the different natures of the speeches is important. When coupled with the evidence of all governments studied here moving to the centre over time, a further area of research is warranted.

The second challenge that arose from the findings of the PAP analysis centred around an anticipated argument; that the findings do not reveal changes in the policy agenda as a direct result of the limitations of the method. In order to provide evidence that the methodology serving as the basis of claims in this research is capable of measuring change in the manner in which it has been used here, the PAP coding method was applied in two additional cases. This work appears in Chapter 7 and demonstrates PAP's capacity to map change in the policy agendas of both the Whitlam and Blair governments. This analysis confirms the capacity of PAP to detect and map change in the policy agenda, thus, strengthening confidence in the claim that the Howard government cannot be understood as constituting a turning point in Australian politics.

It is important to acknowledge that the decision to demonstrate the PAP's capacity to map the policy agenda creates a tension between whether this research is testing the rhetorical propositions about the Howard government or whether it is testing the research methodology. While the analysis in Chapter 7 is designed to ensure a strengthened belief in the method's efficacy, the focus of the research is to test the narrative that has emerged about the Howard government.

In claiming that this research represents the policy agenda of Australian governments from 1983 to 2011, it is important to be clear about what is meant by this. This research does not claim to describe the nature of policy initiatives nor does it measure the significance of policy interventions. PAP does not make any assessment about the effectiveness of policy so while an issue may receive a high proportion of a government's attention it does not necessarily follow that there is a positive impact of this attention. This research focused on a specific dimension of policy-making, the policy topics defined by the PAP codebook, which is a government's choice to be interested in macroeconomics, or agriculture or international affairs as distinct features of activity. It is concerned with measuring the extent to which the effort of government is focused on particular kinds of public issues. The changes detailed in this project are concerned with the prioritisation of issues. It is the argument of this research that the PAP coding system and the data that emerged from it creates a new lens for studying the Howard government that is not reflected in the existing literature.

Clearly the Governor General speeches, budget speeches and Acts of Parliament do not capture every element of government policy-making. For example, this research does not consider parliamentary questions, departmental documents, Senate Committee reports or Cabinet minutes. All of these documents would be valid additions to this work. While the data gathered do not represent an exhaustive set of all policy statements made by all of the governments under analysis in this research, it is reasonable to argue that they are key components of decision-making in Australian politics and that they produce a reliable set of data for analysis.

One of the criticisms of PAP is that its central measure is attention and that it is not always the case that attention measures the importance a government attaches to a particular policy issue. The key assumption in the PAP is that the proportion of attention is a proxy for the importance that a government attaches to an issue. What follows from this is the claim that increases in attention measure increases in importance of an issue. Governments can pay attention to an issue for a variety of reasons and it does not always correspond with action. For example, a government may talk about the importance of education in a Governor General speech yet does not match this attention with resources in the budget or pieces of legislation enacting structural change. The relative amount of time a government allocates to a policy issue does not always correlate with the amount of time a government acts with respect to that issue.

A general concern with the adoption of coding schemes is consistency in coding decisions and the need for coders to make choices about how statements are categorised. These choices are not always self-evident because in reality, documents do not always conform to categories and can plausibly be coded under a different category. For example, a coder may determine that the clean

energy initiatives of the Rudd/Gillard government may be coded as energy policy, while another may code it as environment policy, and for another coder the carbon tax implications warrant coding as a macroeconomic policy. As highlighted in Chapter 3, this concern is less relevant for this project as the majority of the coding has been conducted by only one coder. The coding done by other coders has been systematically checked for consistency in coding decisions and further blind coding of four budget speeches was undertaken and tested for inter-coder reliability using Cronbach's alpha test.

While acknowledging the limitations of the two coding methods applied in this research, both the PAP and CMP are widely used measurements in political science across the United States and Europe, if not in Australia. Significant bodies of literature have emerged applying these methods in many countries worldwide. The limitations of both of these methods are certainly valid but do not negate the value of introducing empirical evidence into a body of literature in which it has not existed before.

An additional dimension that would have supplemented this research, and an area for future work, is the extension of the coding work to consider the relationship between the governments analysed here and public attitudes in the formulation of the policy agenda. An understanding of the extent to which the public considered the same issues to be important, and the level of attention given to them in the national media would enable a broader depiction of the changes in the policy agenda in Australian politics. A shift recognising the wider, systemic agenda of the issues defined by the community and the media could be categorised according to the policy content coding system of the PAP. The ways in which the public agenda engages with processes of issue prioritisation and how government policy responds and reacts to shifts in public opinion may be reflected in changes to policy and provide valuable insights into the dynamism of this relationship. Claims about populism and opportunism in the period analysed here would be provided with an additional lens through which to consider the development of public policy and the extent to which the Howard government was different in this regard from the Labor governments that preceded and followed it.

The perspective offered here is distinctive because the empirical analysis allows for an aggregation of the policy agenda which is enhanced by capturing the complexity of policy change, and interrogating the data to discover the underlying details of the changes in attention paid to policy. A consistent and reliable method for mapping and measuring policy agendas has been used to support the comparative work undertaken by this research, allowing engagement with the analysis and diminishing the circular nature that characterises much of the debate about the Howard era. The key value of this research lies in its use of systematic measurement. By applying PAP and CMP, this research has brought four areas concerning the Howard era into empirical focus. The first

is identifying the overall policy priorities of the government and which policy areas dominated the Howard government's attention. The second is the platform for comparison with the agenda that existed before and after the Howard government provided by the analysis of the PAP and CMP data. The third area is identifying when agenda changes occur, and the nature and longevity of the change, thereby revealing whether the change was sustained over the duration of the Howard tenure or whether there was a sudden punctuation when the Howard government was elected. The fourth area is that the CMP analysis allowed for an alternative to the characterisation of the Howard government as constituting a major policy punctuation by analysing its ideological spatial positioning when compared to that of the Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments.

This thesis argues that the information presented here is an accurate representation of the policies to which the Howard government paid attention during its term in office. In coupling the data mapping with the descriptive work on Howard government policies in Chapter 4, there can be confidence that the trends evidenced in the data are reflected in changes in policy accounts of Australian politics.

Many argue that Howard was different; PAP demonstrates that in many ways he was not. Continuity and discontinuity theorists in Australia predominately focus on whether Hawke and Keating created a break in Labor tradition, with many academics comparing policies of previous Labor leaders to Rudd and Gillard to assert how consistent their governments were with Labor values. Many conservative commentators focus on contrasting Howard with Menzies or other Liberal leaders. The assumption implicit in this kind of approach is that governments make policy and form agendas in a vacuum, solely driven by their own intentions and convictions. As is evident in the analysis here, and drawing on the work of Baumgartner and Jones, much of policy is developed within an existing framework, and much stays in a state of stasis much of the time. While it is understandable that authors focus on changes and difference because it makes a compelling story, this should not be the goal of political science.

This research does not argue that its findings settle all disputes about the Howard government, rather it provides a sound methodology through which to conduct debates and test claims. The evidence provided through the application of coding systems of spatial positioning and policy-agenda change does not displace the commentary but complements and supports the existing qualitative work and future policy research endeavours. The implication of the findings of this research is that on its own the aggregate method does not capture all of the variances and complexities of policy change but that the method employed here can be complemented by other means of interrogating the data on the policy agenda.

This research contributes a new understanding of the policy agenda in Australia providing evidence of the degree of change effected by the Howard government. It enhances existing studies

by providing an additional level of analysis to measure and identify the policy issues that experience incremental change, those that experience radical change, and those that experience minimal or no change under the Howard government. It is hoped that the quantitative nature of the research and its attempt to provide a rigorously analytical approach makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature about the Howard government. The strength of this project not only relates to the 'big' questions but also emerges out of the validity and rigorous nature of the method chosen and its standing within the field of public policy and political science and the breadth of its operationalisation.

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## Appendix 1: Australian Policy Agendas Codes and their Sub-topic Codes

Policy Agendas Code	Sub-topic Codes
Macroeconomics	General; inflation and interest rates; unemployment rate; monetary supply; national budget and debt; taxation; industrial policy; price control and stabilisation; other
Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties	General; ethnic minority and racial group discrimination; gender and sexual orientation discrimination; age discrimination; handicap or disease discrimination; voting rights and issues; freedom of speech and religion; right to privacy and access to government information; anti-government activities; other
Health	General; comprehensive healthcare reform; insurance reform; regulation of drug industry; facilities construction and regulation; provider and insurer payment; medical liability; health workforce and training; prevention communicable diseases and health promotion; infants and children; mental health; long-term care; prescription-drug coverage and costs; other or multiple benefits and procedures; tobacco-abuse treatment and education; alcohol abuse and treatment; controlled and illegal drug-abuse treatment and education; drug and alcohol or substance abuse treatment; research and development; other
Agriculture	General; agricultural trade; government subsidies to farmers; food inspection and safety; agricultural marketing research and promotion; animal and crop disease and pest control; animal welfare; fisheries and fishing; agricultural research and development; other
Labour, Employment and Immigration	General; worker safety and protection; employment training and workforce development; employee benefits; employee relations and labour unions; fair labour standards; youth employment and child labour; parental leave and child care; migrant and seasonal workers; immigration and refugee issues; other
Education and Culture	General; higher education; elementary and secondary education; education of underprivileged students; vocational education; special education; educational excellence; arts and humanities (culture); research and development; other
Environment	General; drinking-water safety; waste disposal; hazardous waste and toxic chemical regulation; air pollution and global warming; indoor environmental hazards; species and forest protection; coastal water pollution and conservation; land and water conservation; research and development; other
Energy	General; nuclear energy and nuclear regulatory issues; electricity and hydroelectricity; natural gas and oil; coal; alternative and renewable energy; energy conservation; research and development; other
Transportation	General; mass and public transportation and safety; highway (road) construction maintenance and safety;

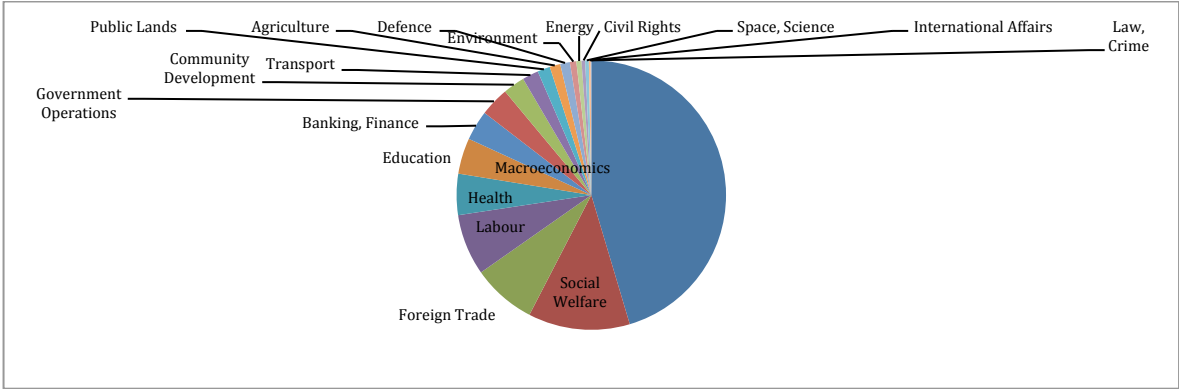
	airports and air-traffic control and safety; railroad transportation and safety; truck and automobile transportation and safety; maritime issues; public works (infrastructure development); research and development; other
Law, Crime and Family Issues	General; government departments dealing with law and crime; white-collar crime and organised crime; illegal drug production trafficking and control; court administration; prisons; juvenile crime and the juvenile justice system; child abuse and child pornography; family issues (births, deaths and marriages); police and weapons control; criminal and civil code; riots and crime prevention (public order); other
Social Welfare	General; food stamps and nutrition monitoring programmes; poverty and assistance for low-income families; elderly issues and elderly assistance programmes; assistance to the disabled and handicapped; social services and volunteer associations (charities); other
Community Development, Planning and Housing	General; housing and community development; urban economic development and general urban issues; rural housing and farming housing assistance programmes; rural economic development; low and middle-income housing programmes and needs; veterans housing assistance and military housing programmes; elderly and handicapped housing; housing assistance for homeless and homeless issues; secondary mortgage market; other
Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce	General; banking system and financial institution regulation; securities and commodities regulation; consumer finance; debt and bankruptcy; corporate mergers and corporate management issues; small-business issues; copyrights and patents; domestic disaster relief; tourism; consumer safety and consumer fraud; sports and gambling regulation
Defence	General; Australian and other defence alliances; military intelligence services; military readiness; arms control and nuclear nonproliferation; military aid and weapons sales to other countries; manpower; military personnel and dependence; veterans issues; military procurement and weapons system acquisitions; military installations; reserve forces and affairs; military nuclear and hazardous waste disposal and military environmental compliance; civil defence (war related); Ministry of Defence civilian personnel; oversight of defence contracts and contractors; direct war-related issues; relief of claims against the Australian military; research and development; other
Space, Science, Technology and Communications	General; space agencies; commercial use of space and satellites; science technology transfer and international scientific cooperation; telephone and telecommunication regulation; broadcast industry regulation; weather forecasting and related issues; computer industry and computer security; research and development; other

Foreign Trade	General; trade negotiations and agreements; export promotion and regulation; international private business investment and corporate development; productivity and competitiveness of Australian business and Australian balance of payments; tariff and import restrictions and regulations; exchange rates and related issues; other
International Affairs and Foreign Aid	General; foreign aid; international resources exploitation and resources agreement; developing countries issues (financial); international finance and economic development; China; Soviet Union and Former Republics; Eastern Europe; Western Europe and common market issues; Africa; South Africa; Latin America; Panama Canal issues and other international canal issues; Asia and Pacific Rim; Middle East; human rights; international organisations other than finance: United Nations United Nations Educational; Scientific and Cultural Organization and International Red Cross; international terrorism and hijacking; Australian diplomats and embassies; North America and North Atlantic Ocean; other
Government Operations	General; intergovernmental relations; government efficiency and bureaucratic oversight; postal-service issues; government-employee benefits and civil-service issues; nominations and appointments; currency and commemorative coins; government procurement and contractor management; government property management; customs and excise; executive–legislative relations and administrative issues; regulation of political parties and voter registration; census and statistics; relief of claims against the Commonwealth Government; public holidays; the monarch and royal family issues; prime ministerial or ministerial scandals and resignations; other
Public Lands, Water Management, Colonial and Territorial Issues	General; national parks and recreation; indigenous affairs; natural resources and forest management; water resources development and research; Australian dependencies and territorial issues; other

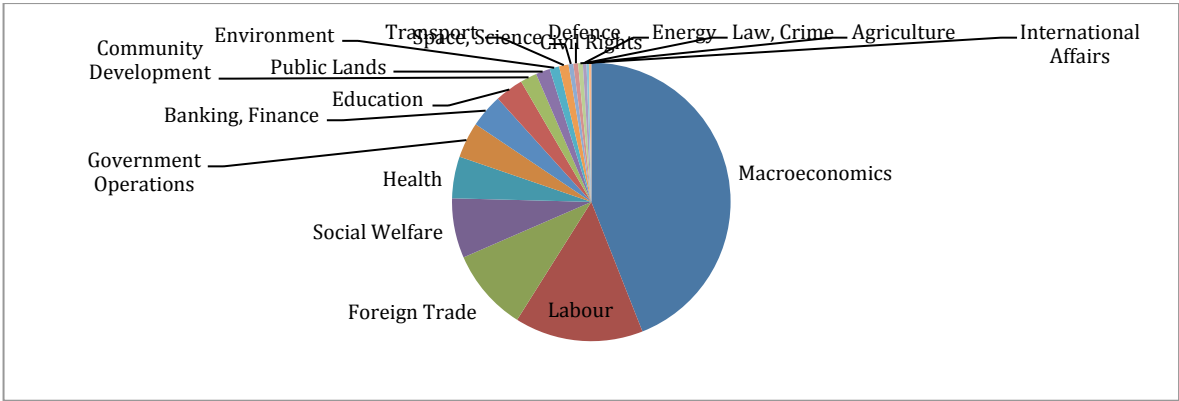
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# Appendix 2: Budget Speeches, Acts of Parliament and Governor General Speeches Proportion of Attention by Policy Code for each Government

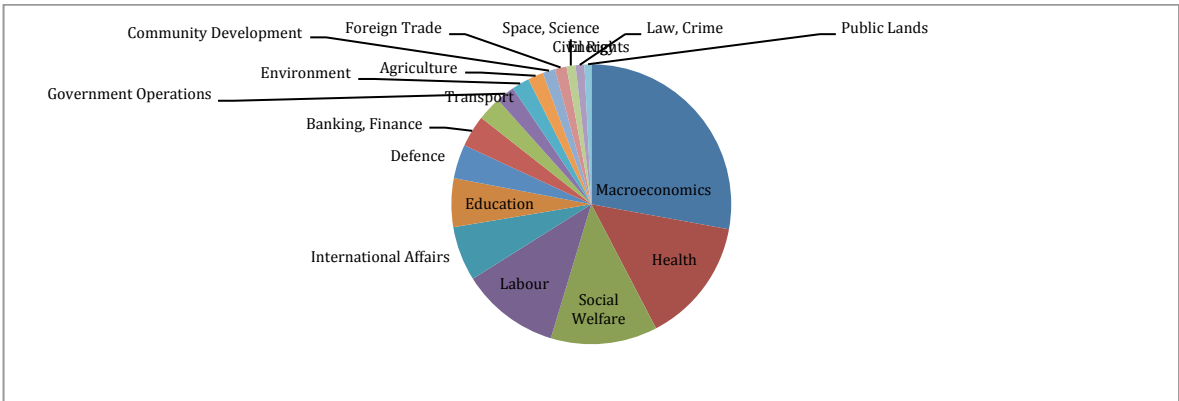
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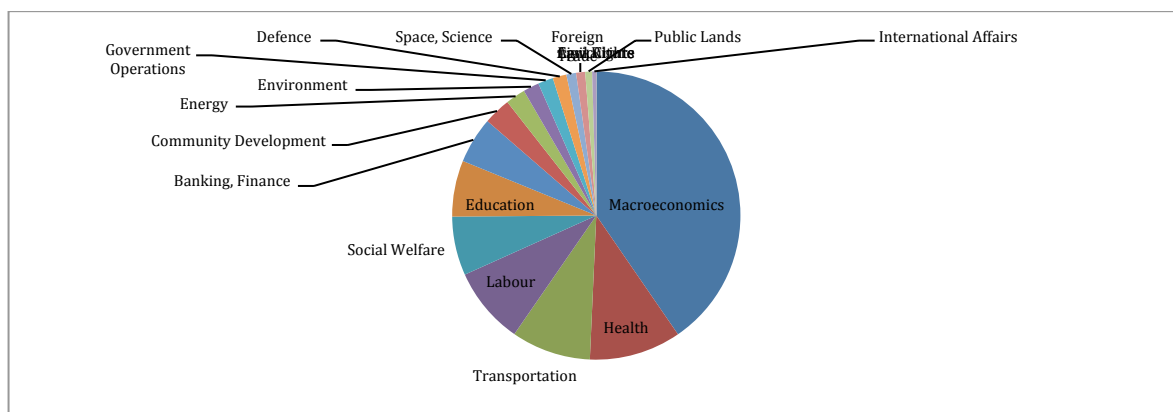
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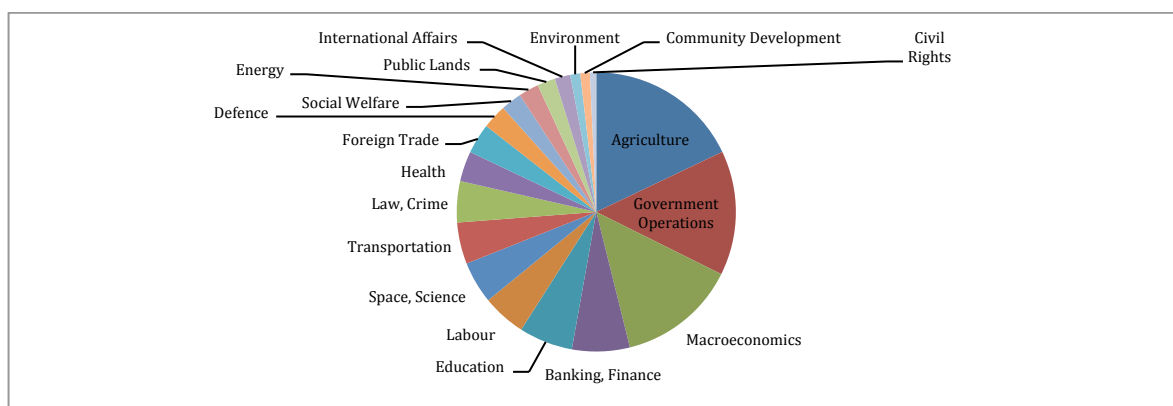
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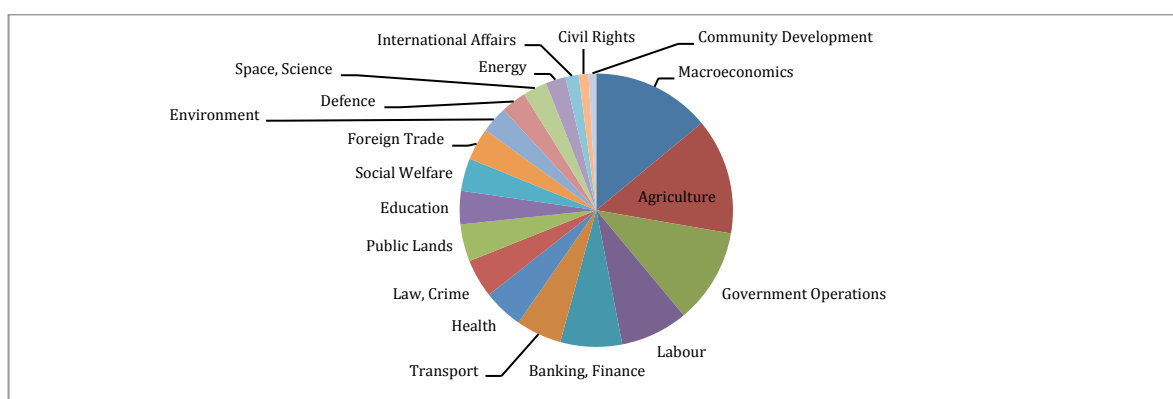
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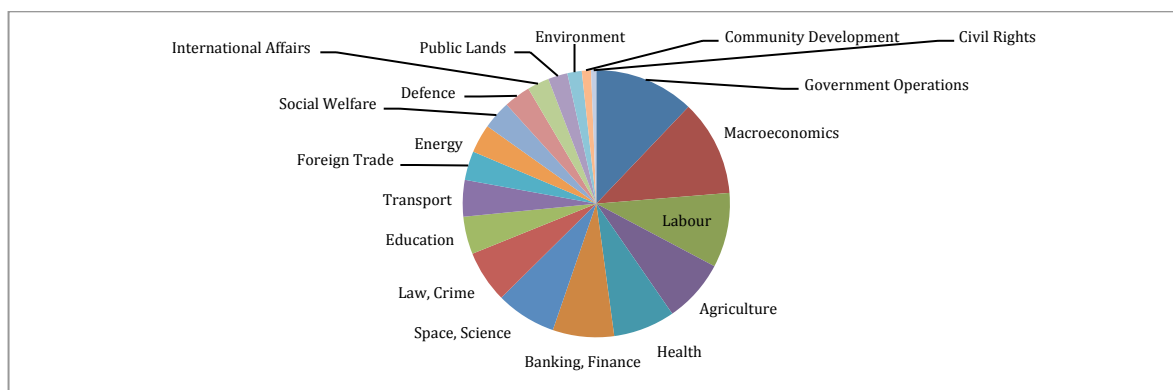
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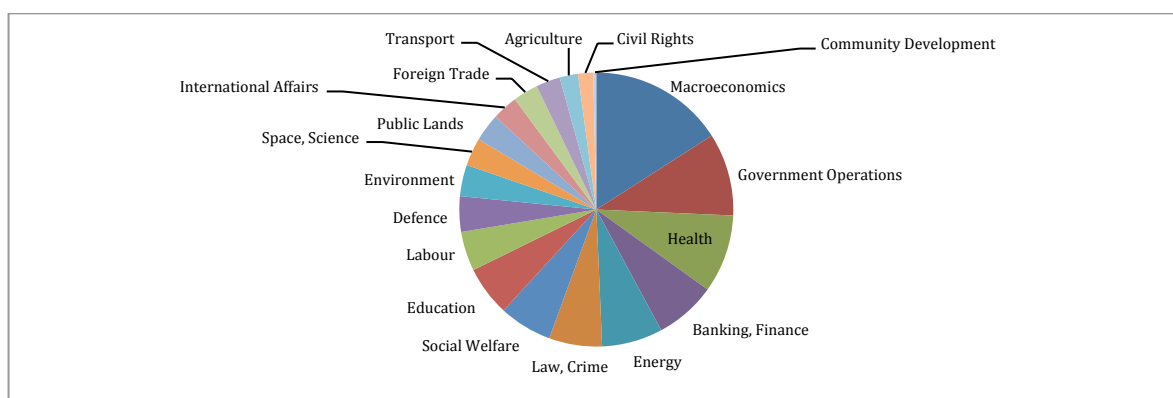
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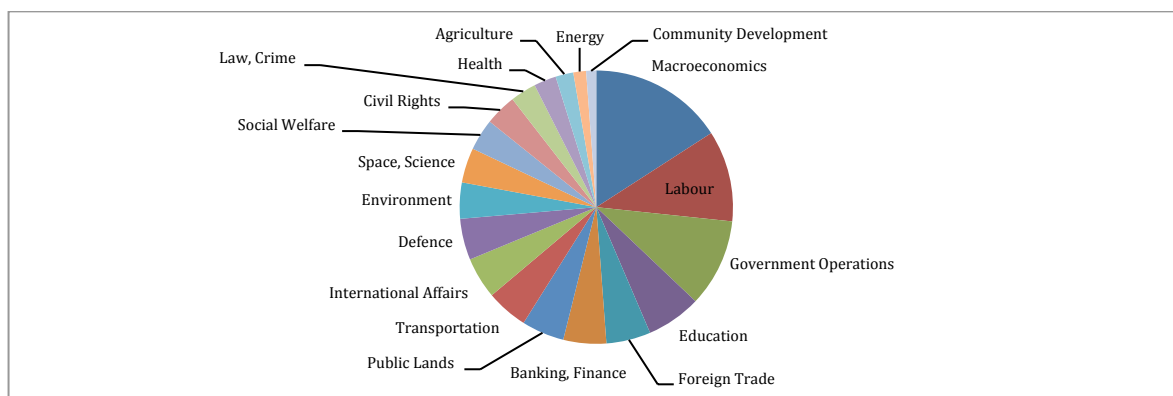
## Acts of Parliament Proportion of Attention by Policy Code: Howard Government



## Acts of Parliament Proportion of Attention by Policy Code: Rudd/Gillard Government

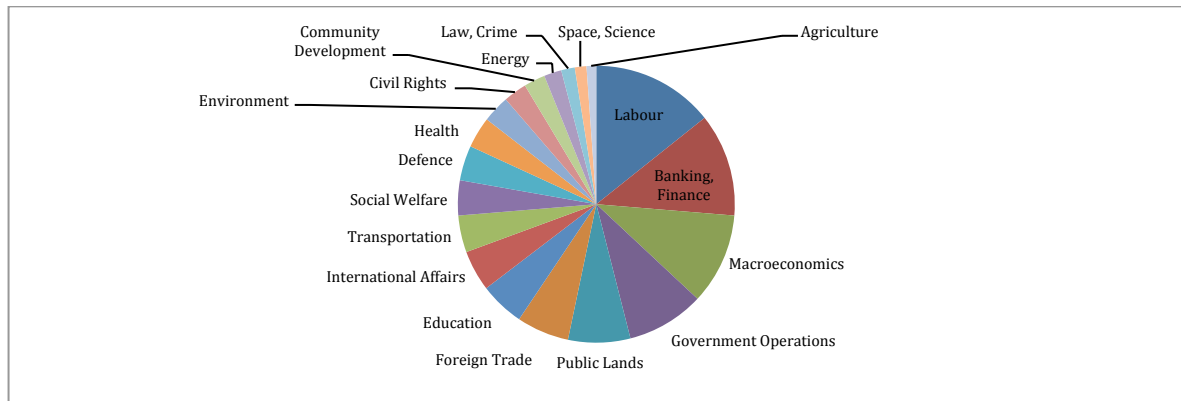


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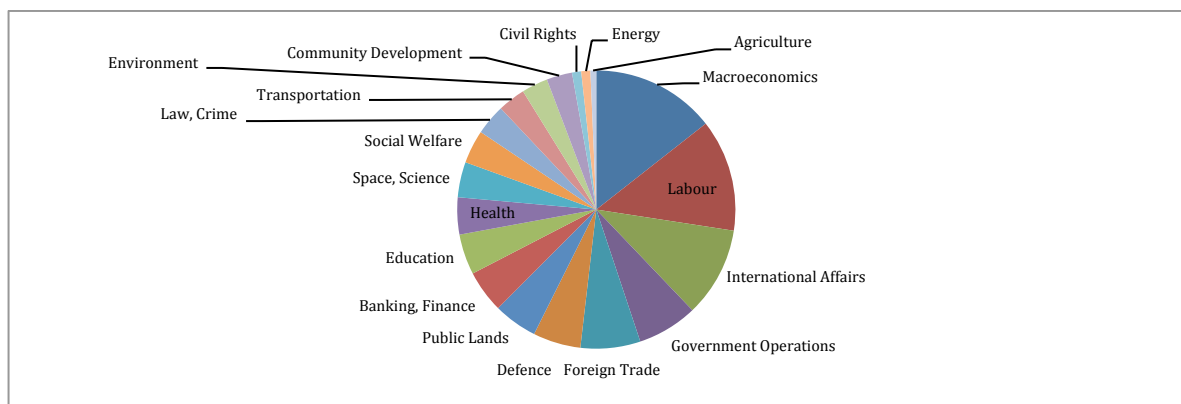




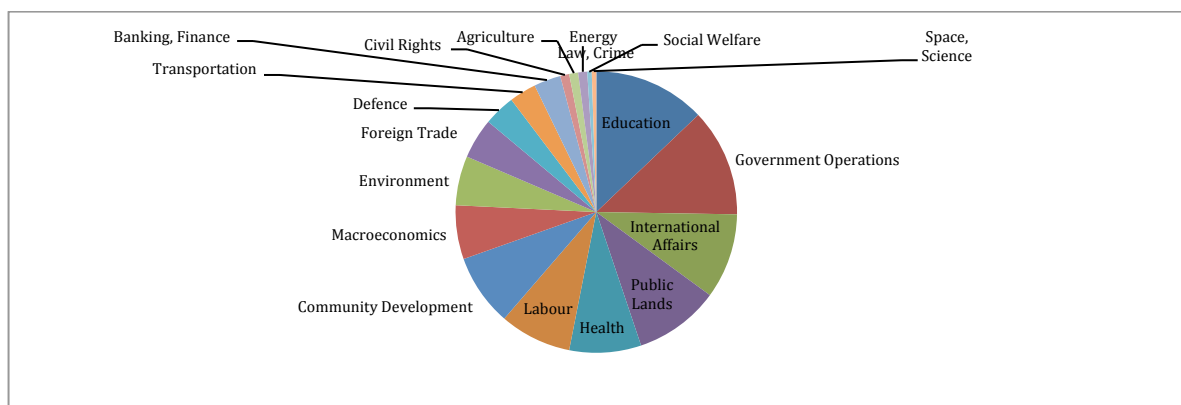
### Keating Government Governor General Speech Proportion of Attention by Policy Code



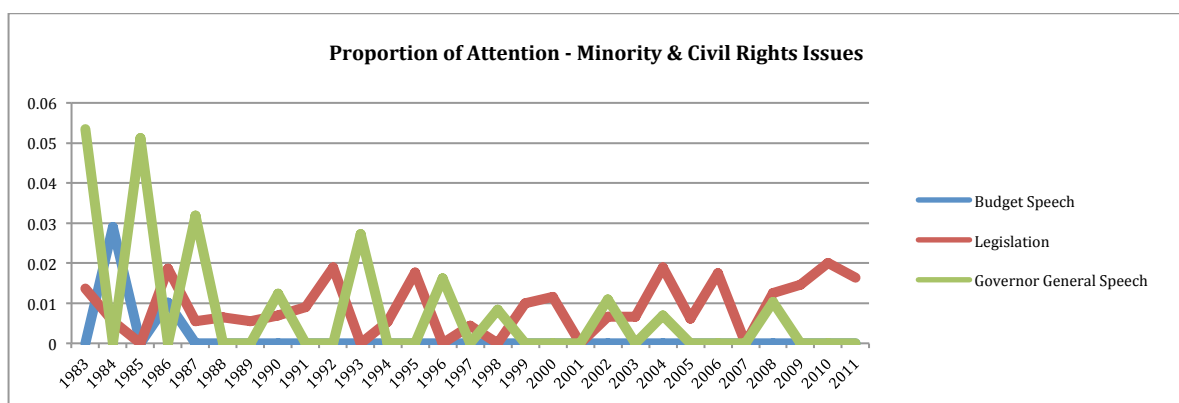
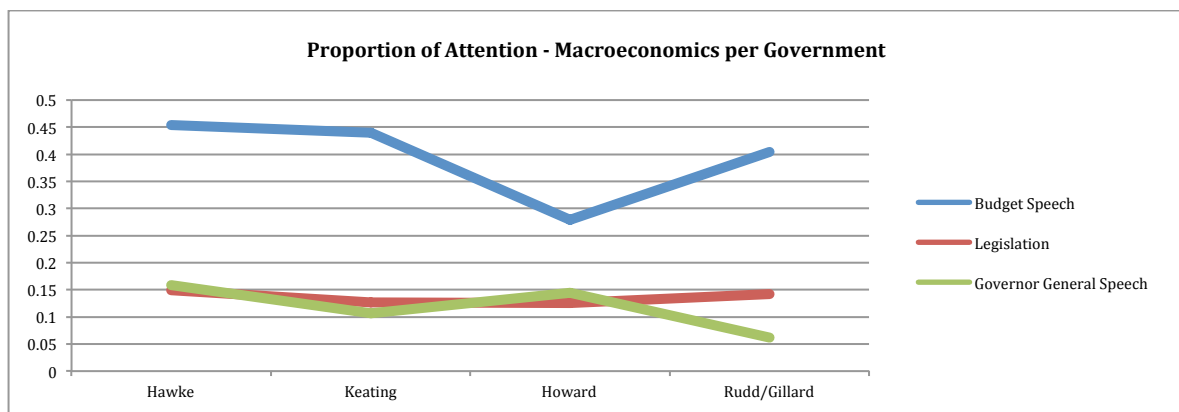
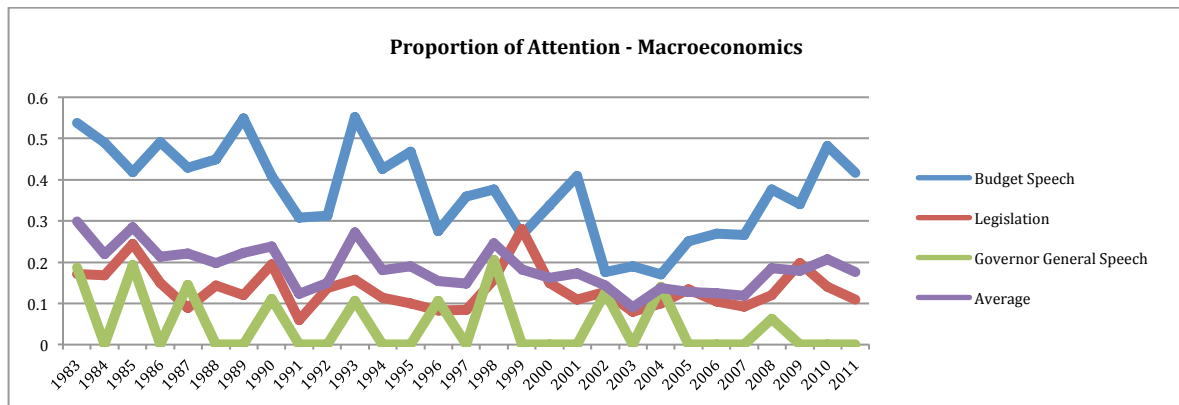
### Howard Government Governor General Speech Proportion of Attention by Policy Code

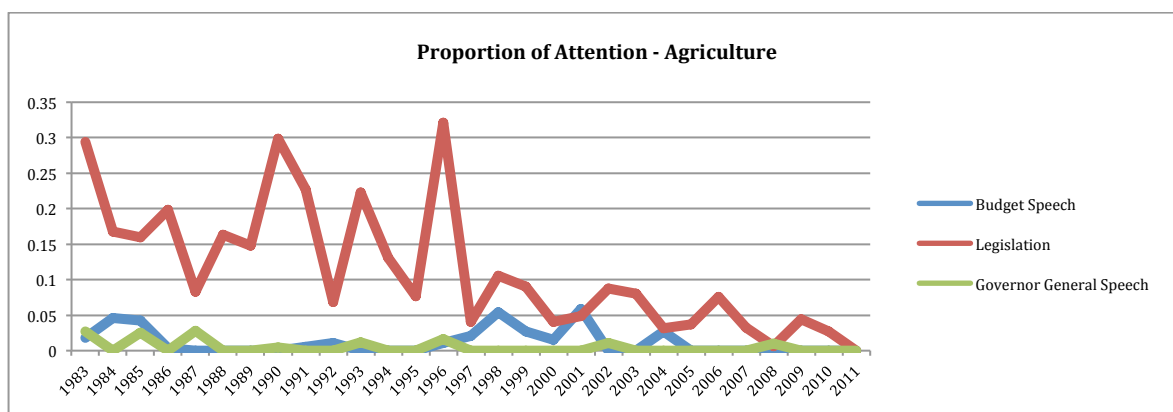
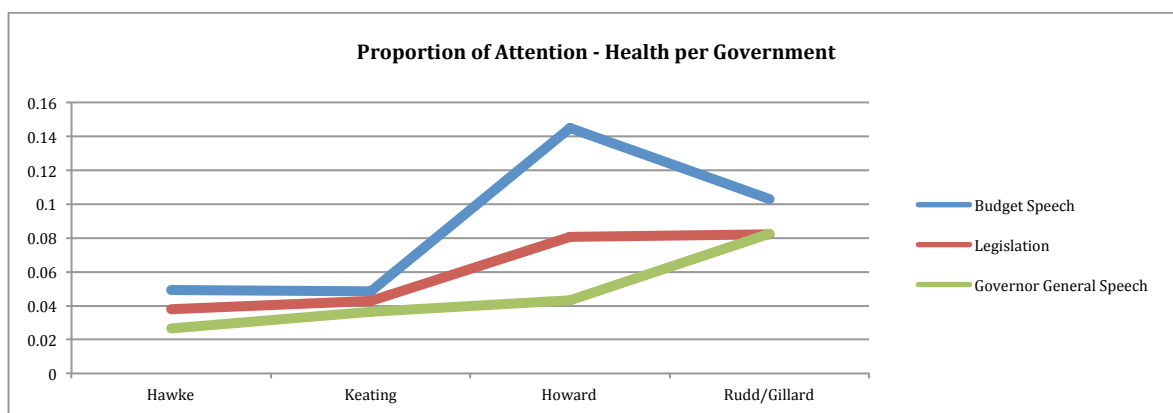
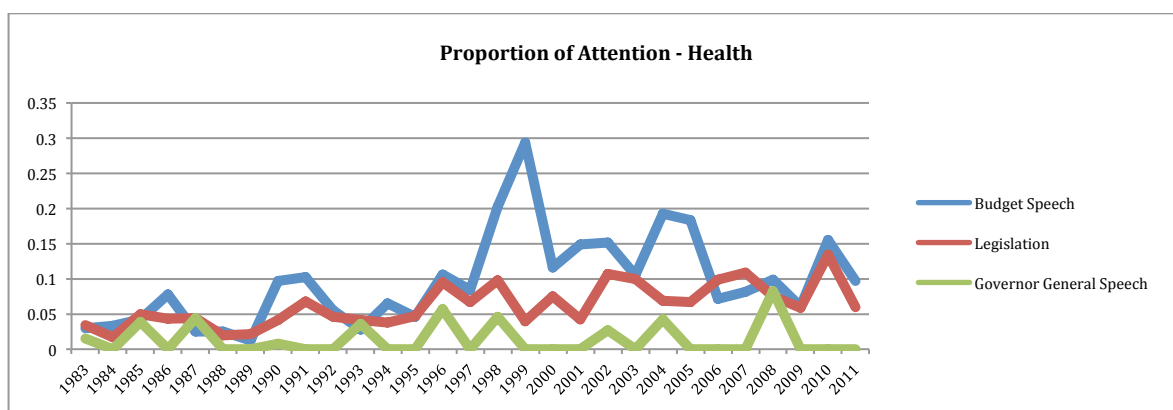
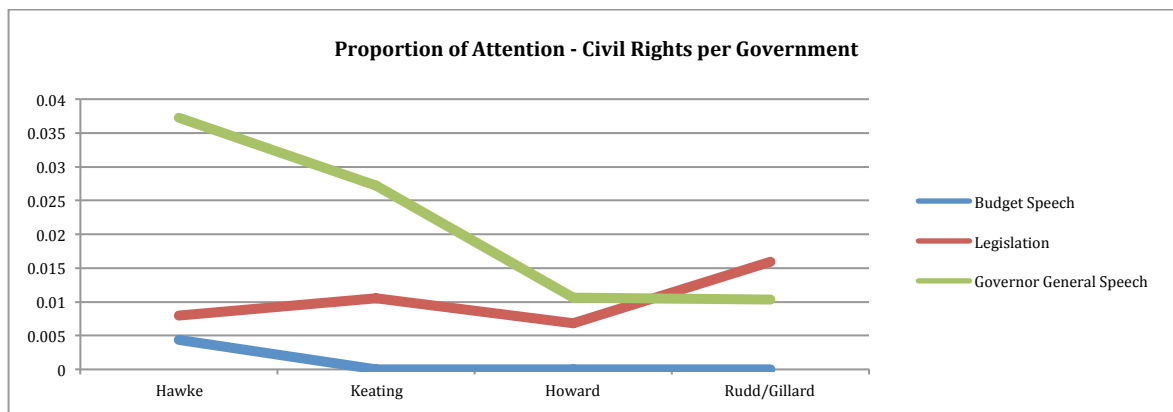


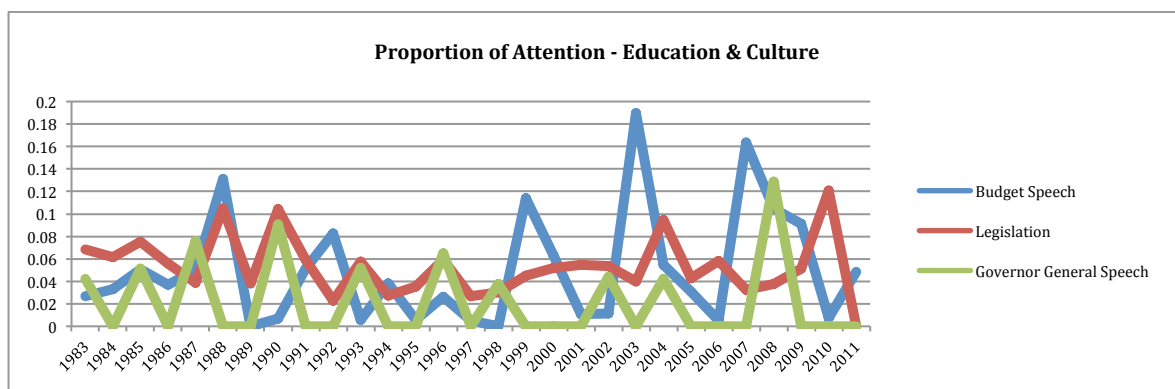
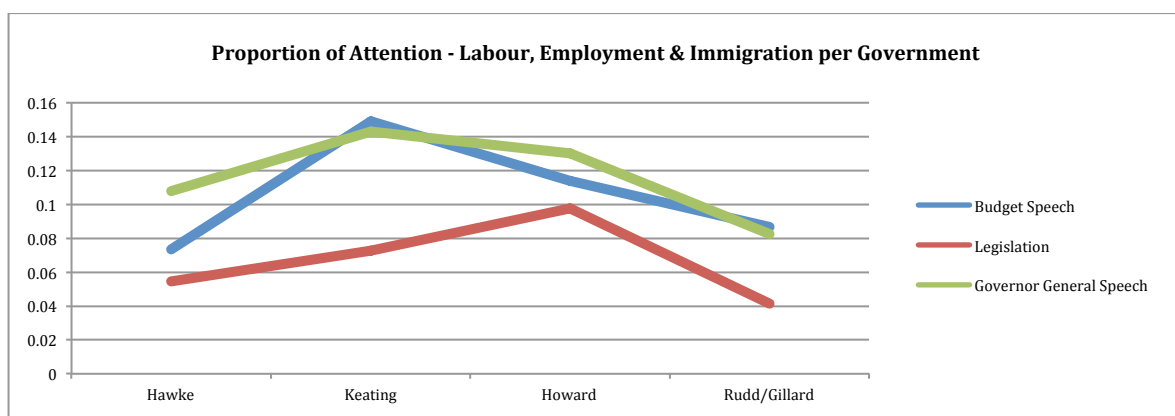
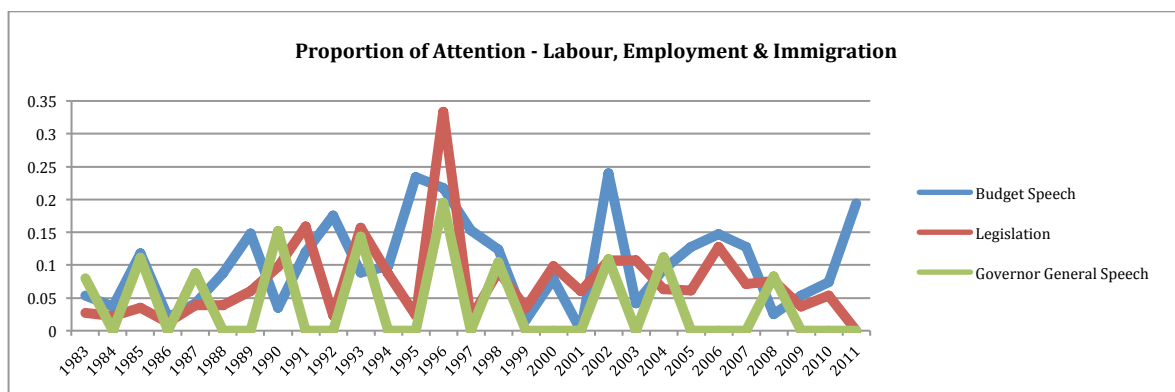
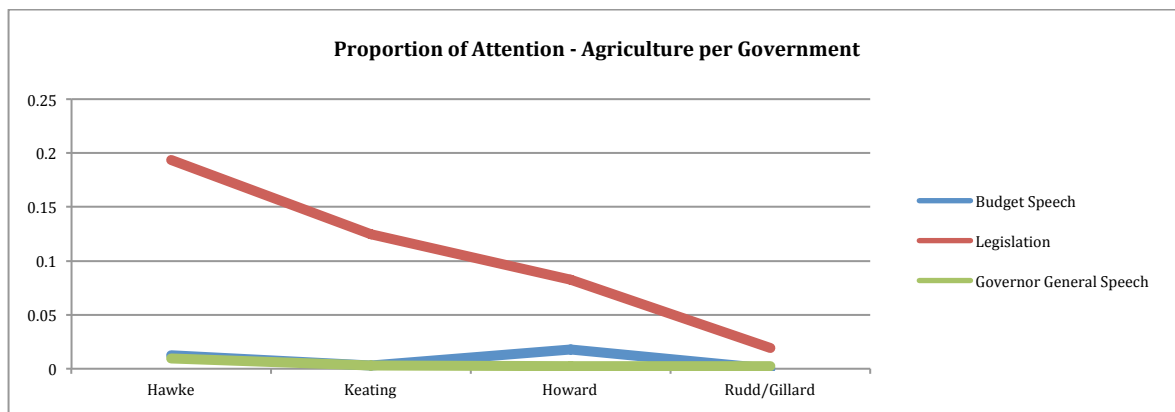
### Rudd/Gillard Government Governor General Speech Proportion of Attention by Policy Code

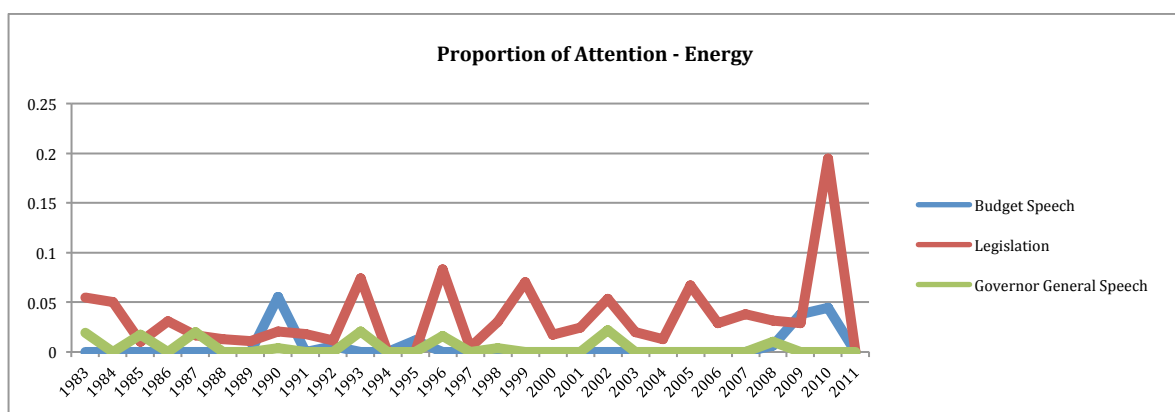
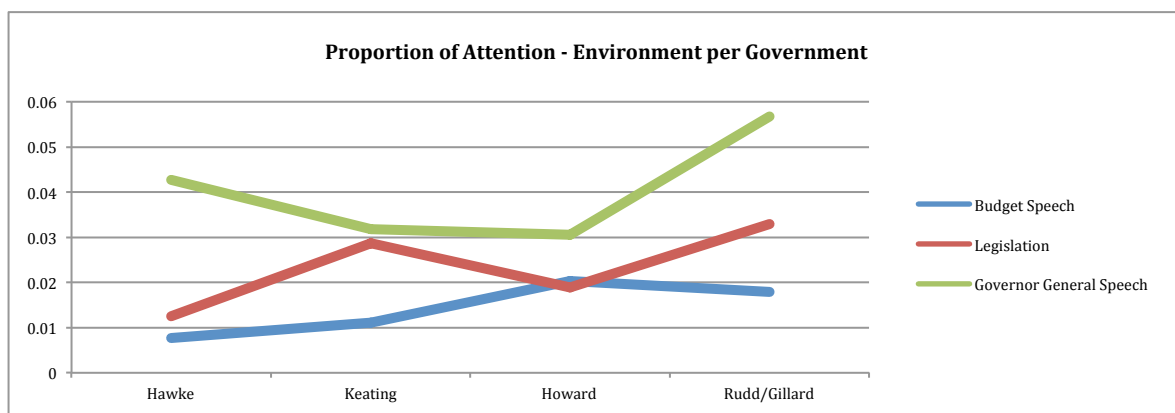
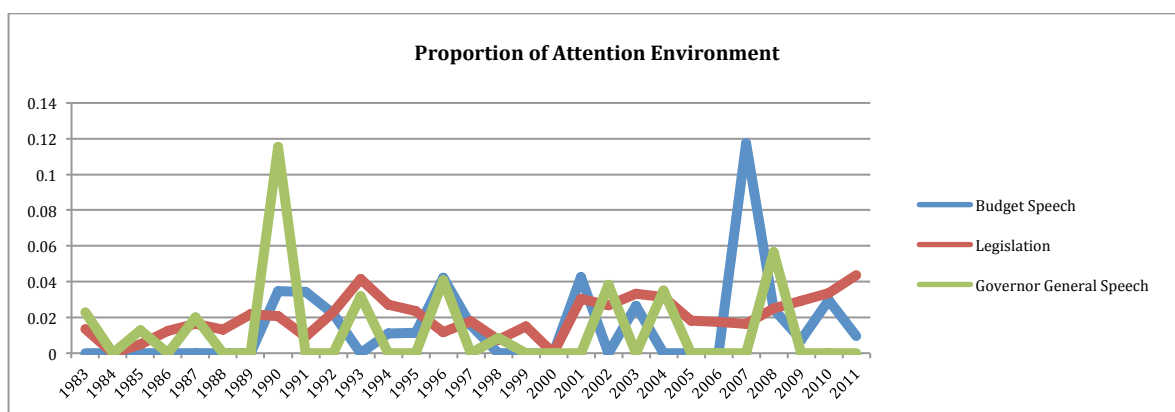
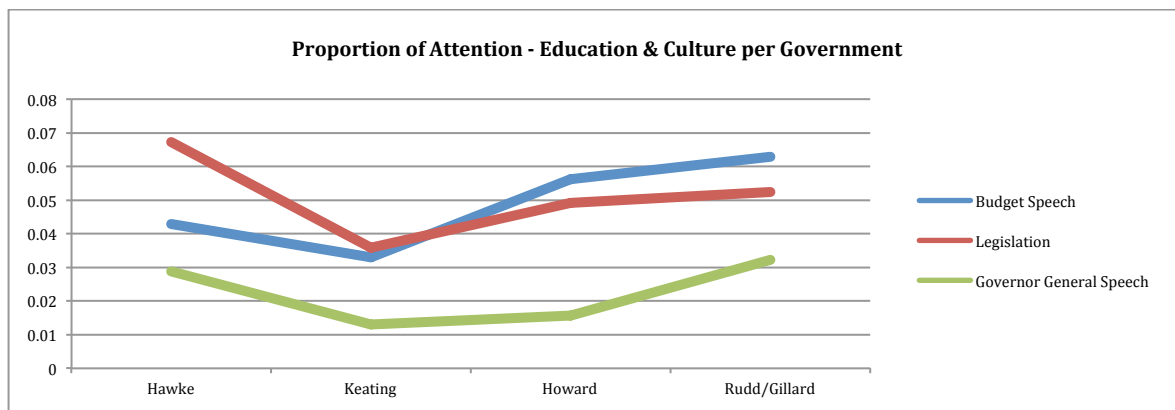


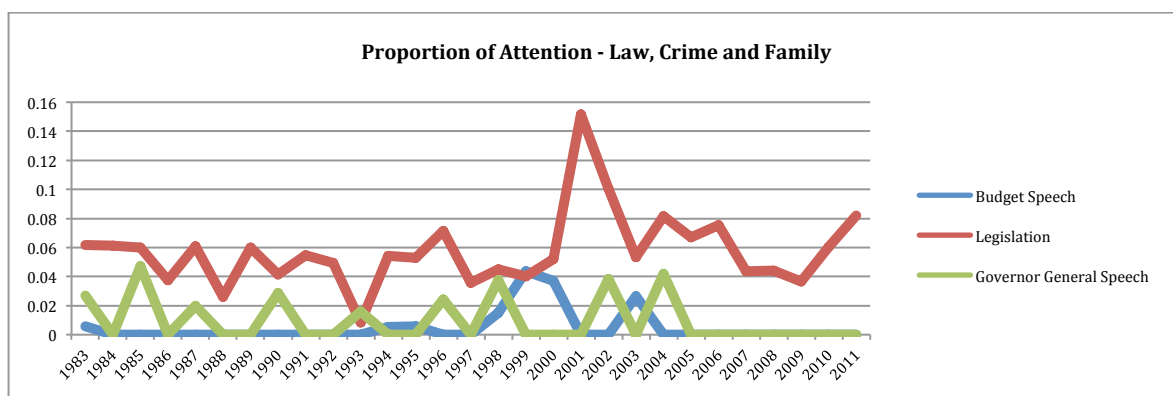
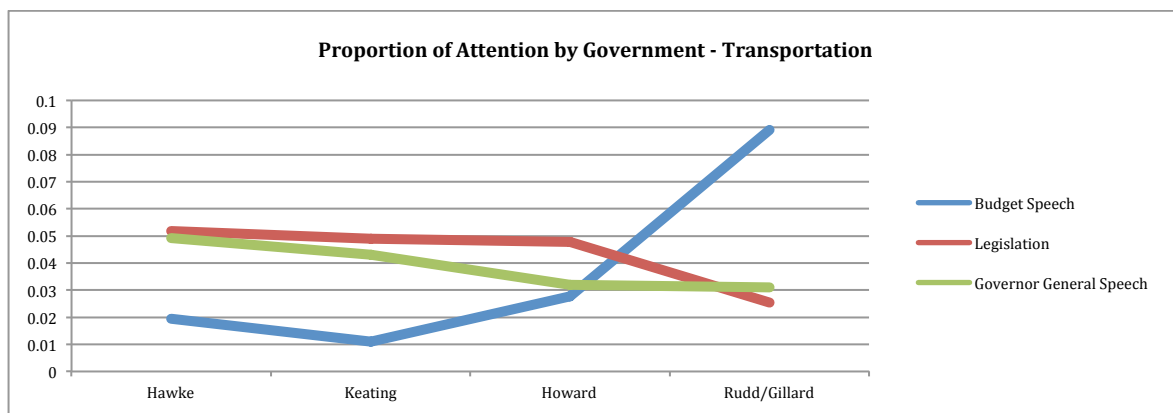
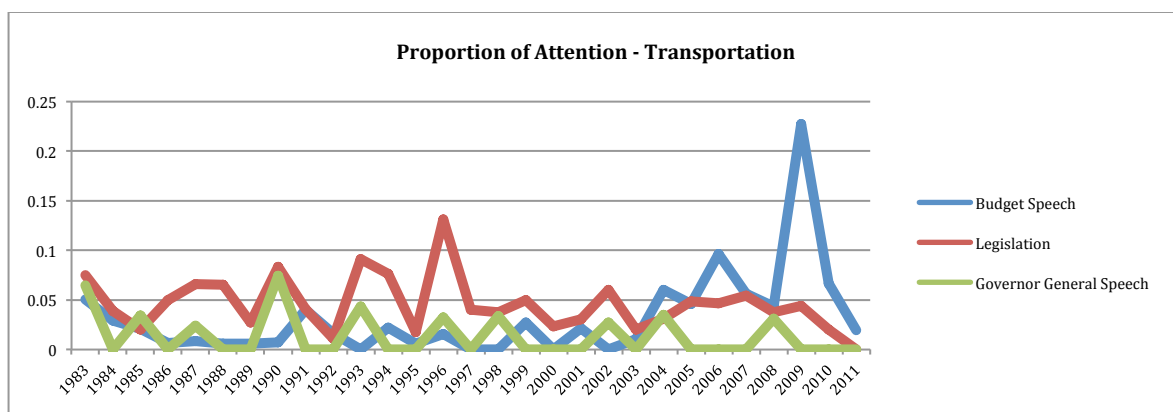
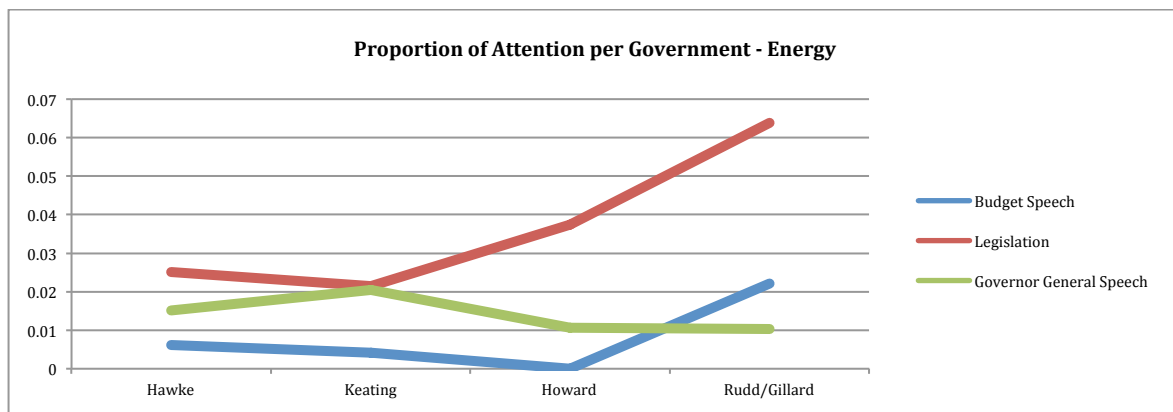
### Appendix 3: Graphical Representations of Proportions of Attention per Year for Each Policy-topic Code and for Each Government

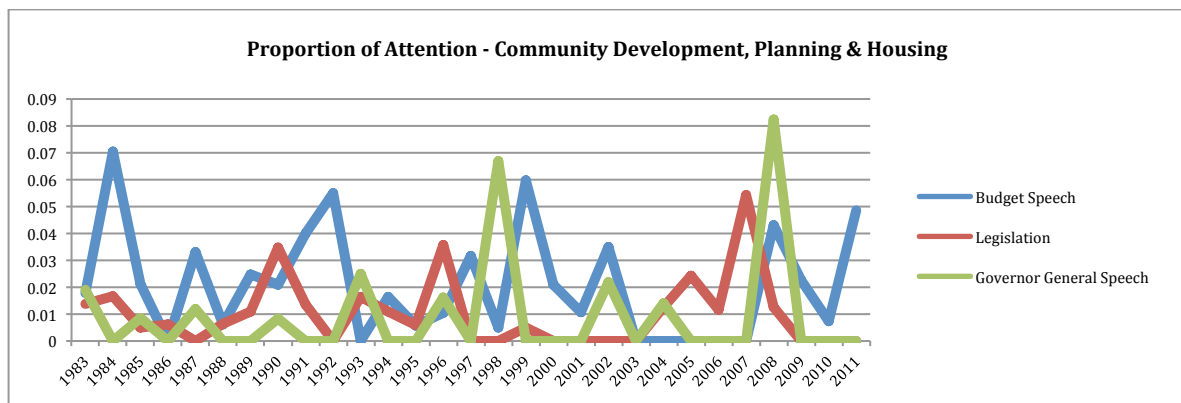
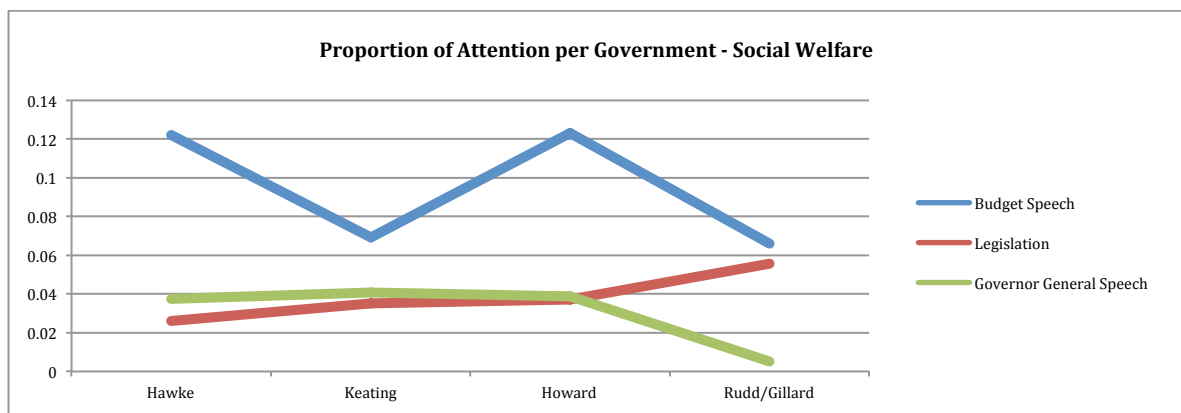
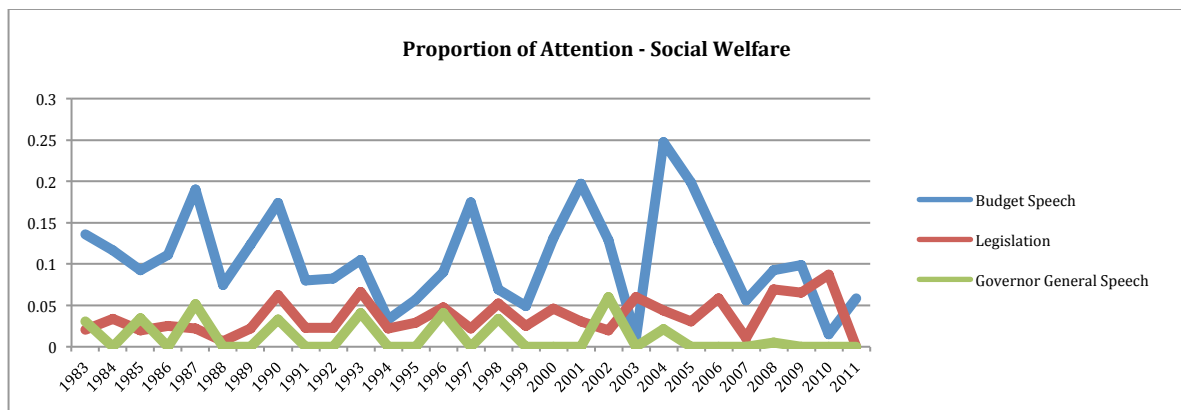
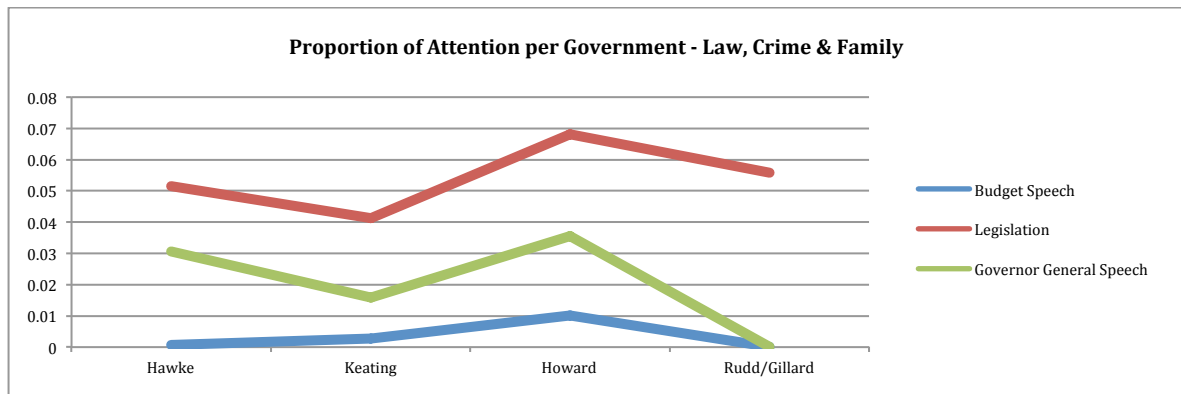


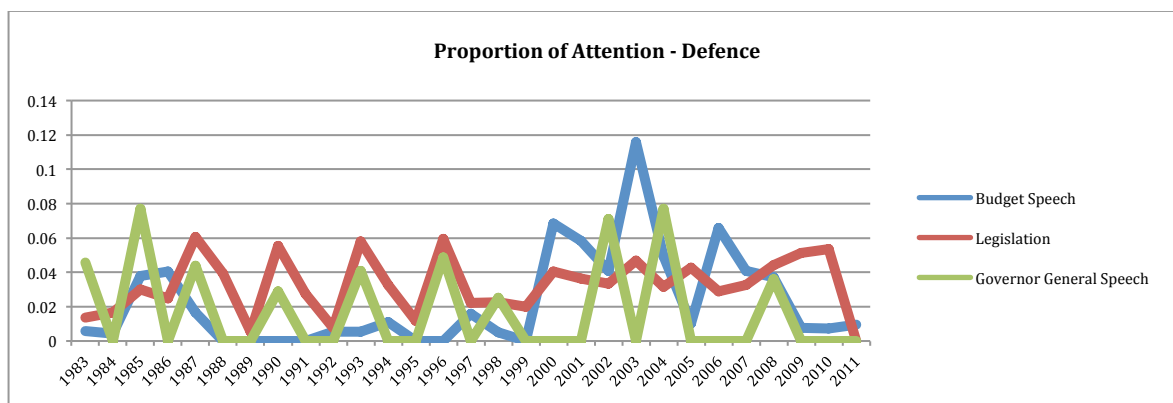
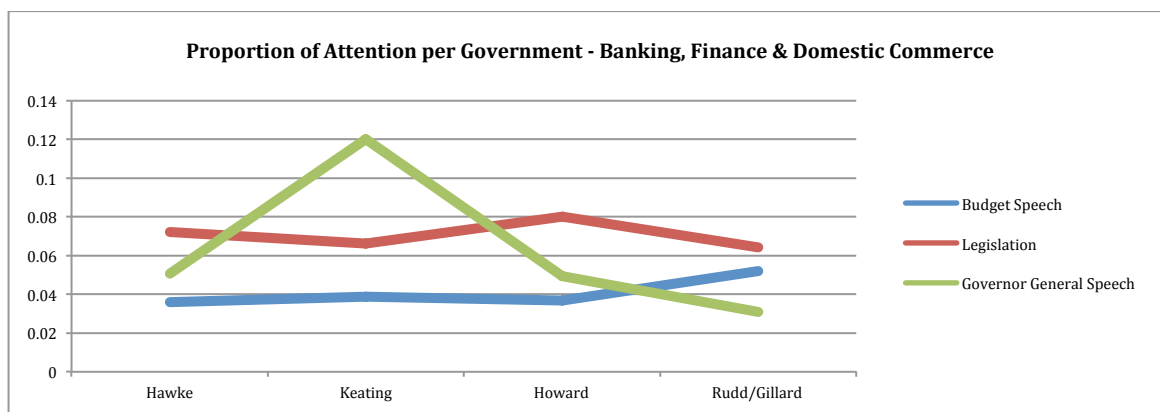
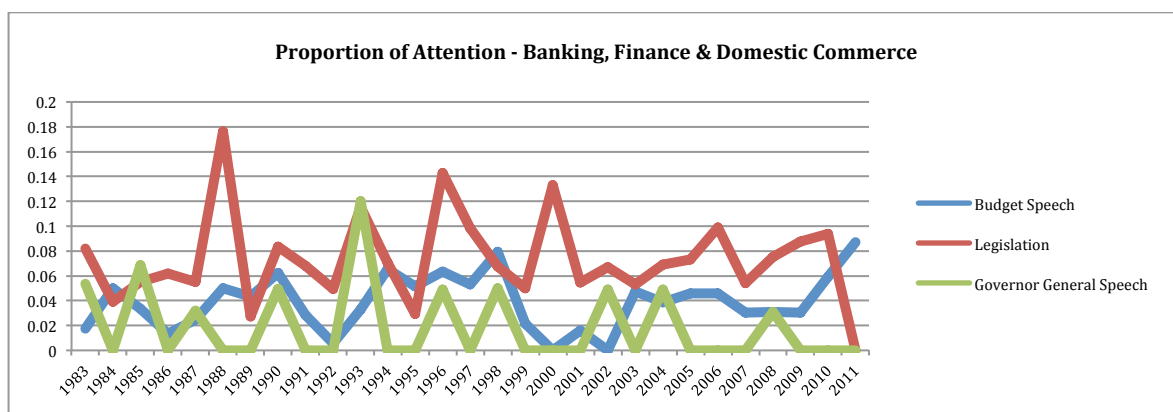
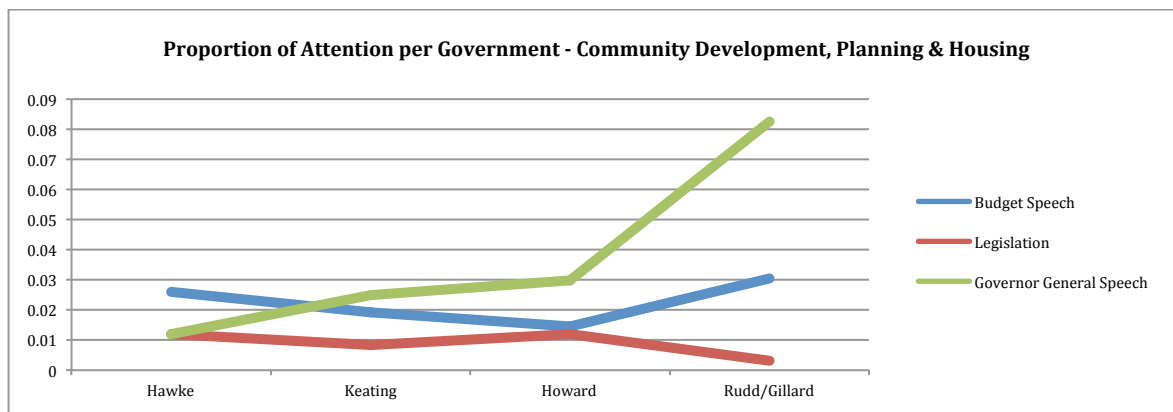




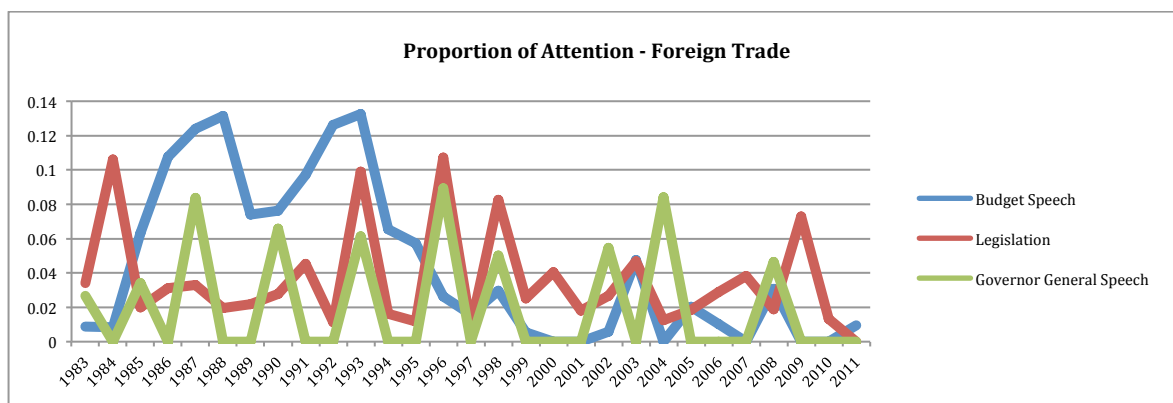
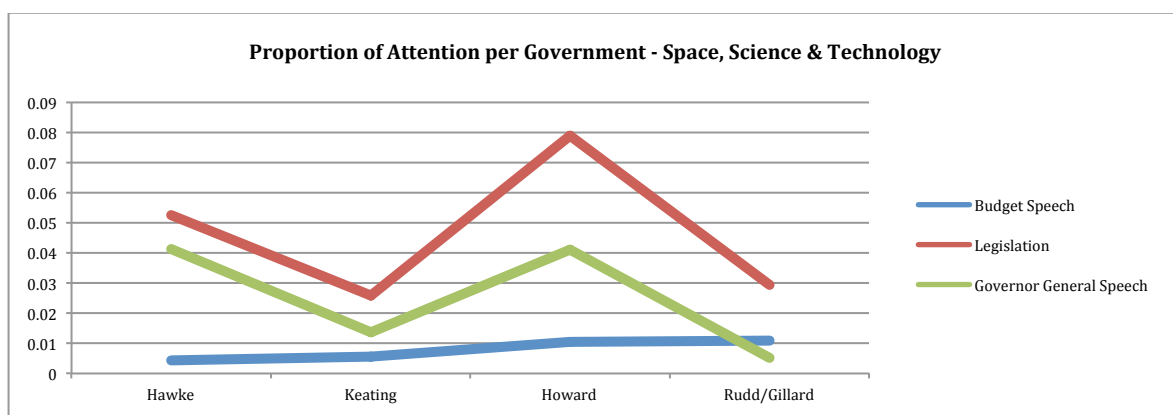
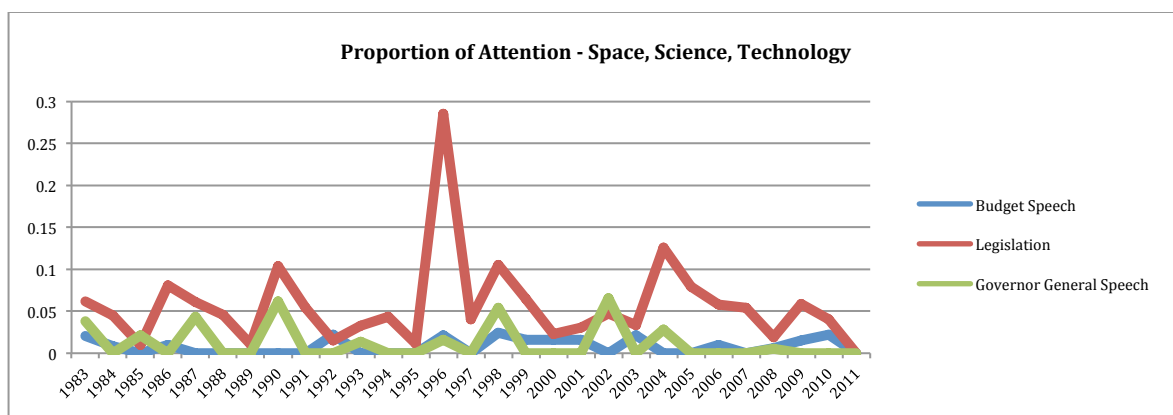
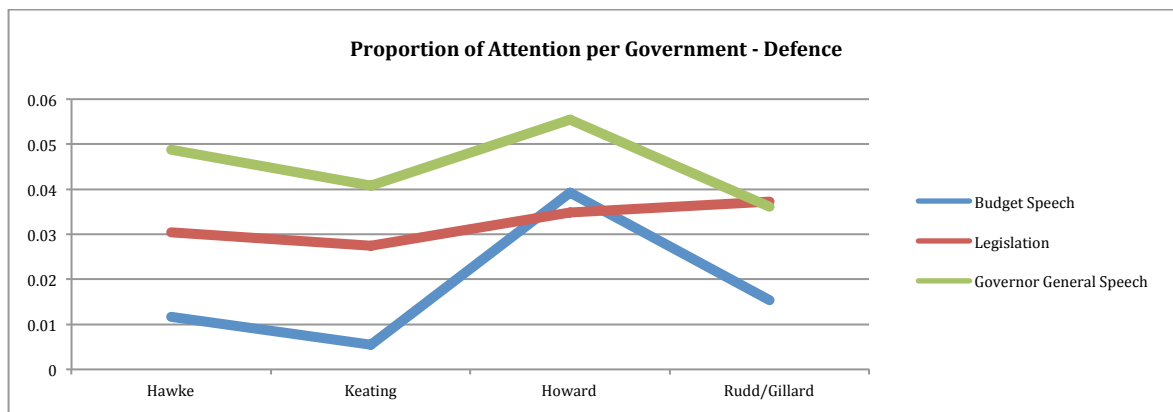


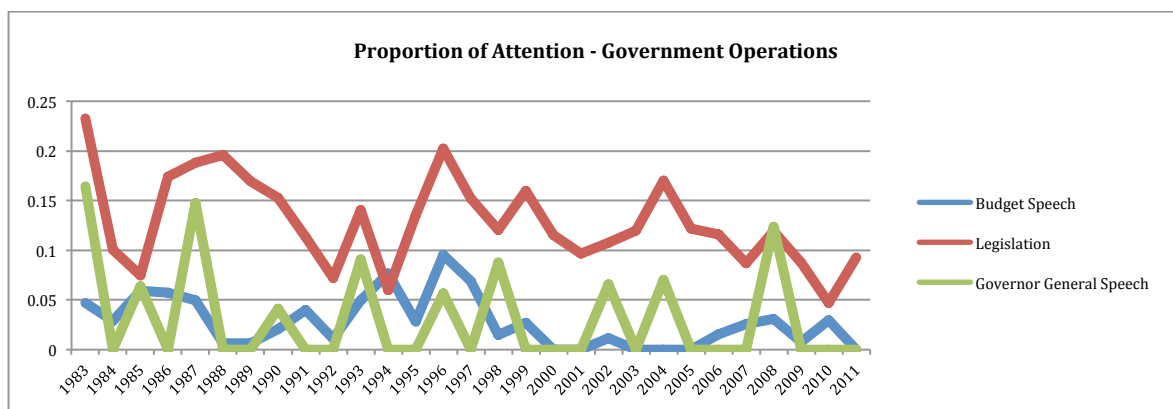
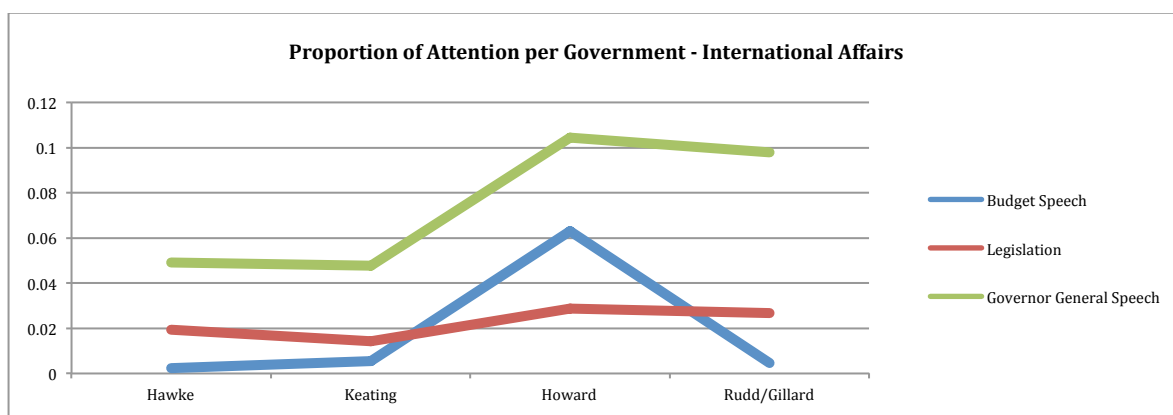
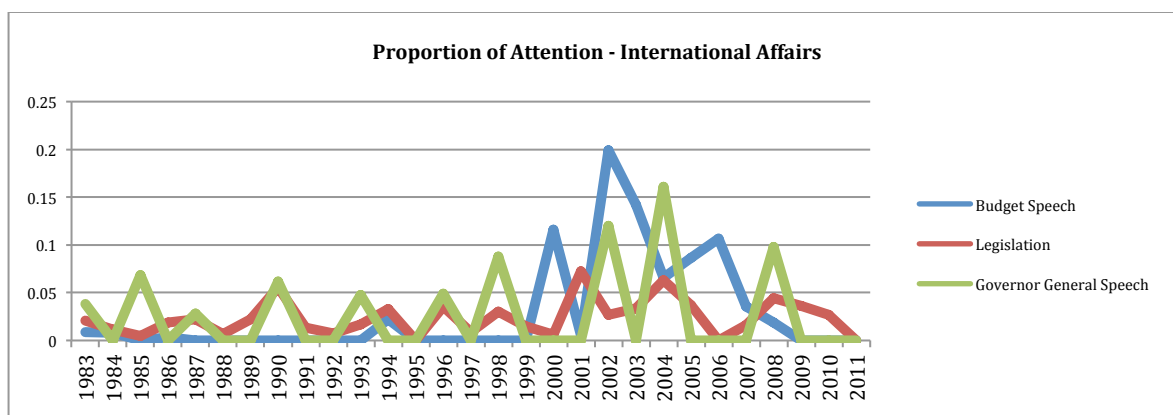
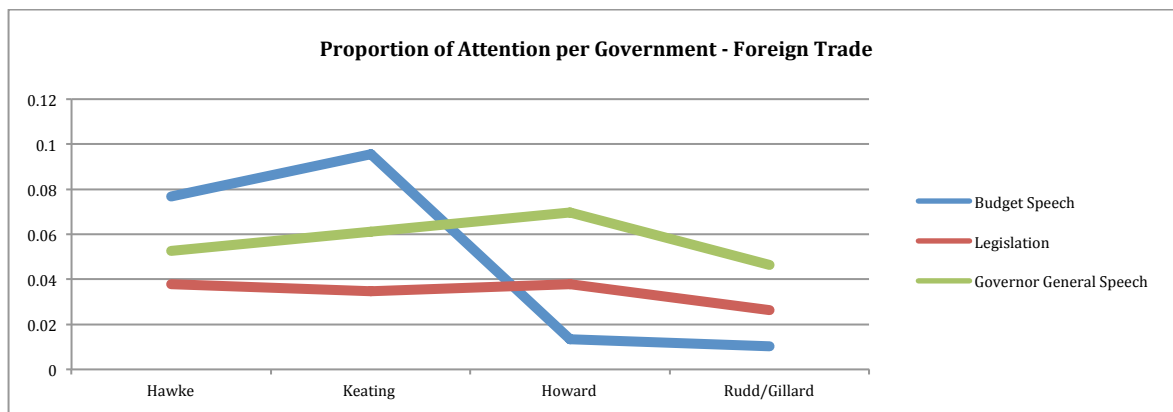


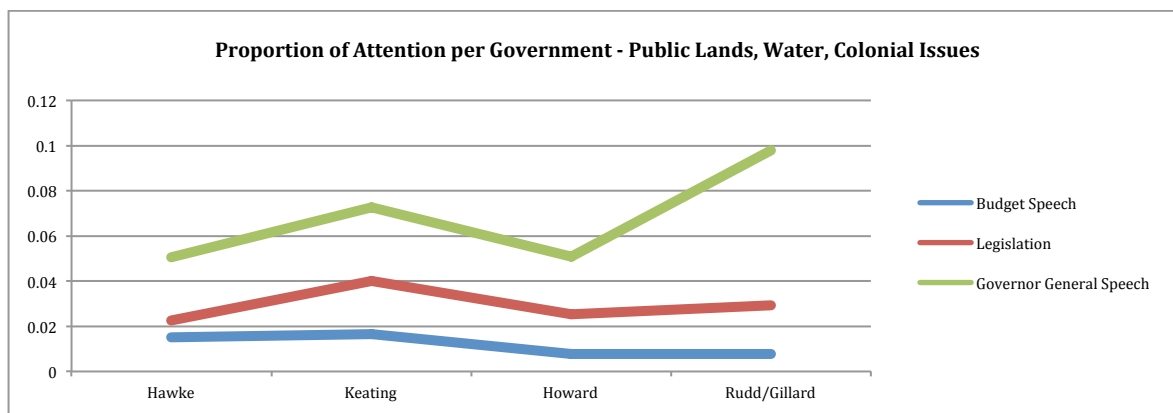
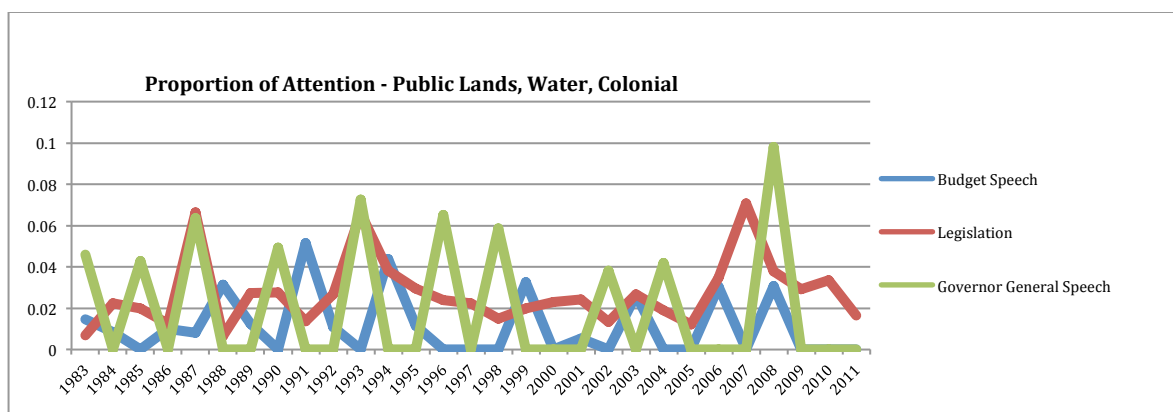
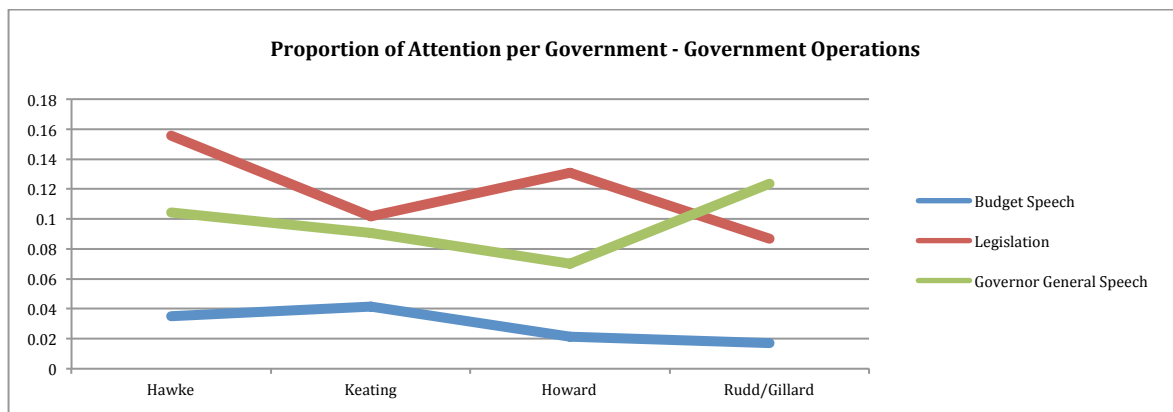












## Appendix 4: Policy Punctuations Greater than 500% 1983–2011

### Budget Speeches: Punctuations Greater Than 500%

Year	Prime Minister	Topic	Proportion (%)
1985	Hawke	Defence	817.14
1985	Hawke	Foreign Trade	663.44
1990	Hawke	Health	687.84
1991	Hawke	Education	640.92
1993	Keating	Banking	503.64
1994	Keating	Education	592.93
2002	Howard	International Affairs	3644.44
2003	Howard	Education	1520.78
2002	Howard	Foreign Trade	710.95
2004	Howard	Social Welfare	2250.28
2006	Howard	Defence	546.86
2007	Howard	Education	3120.11
2009	Rudd	Energy	512.77
2011	Gillard	Education	555.94

### Acts of Parliament: Punctuations Greater Than 500%

Year	Prime Minister	Topic	Proportion (%)
1986	Hawke	Space, Science	707.45
1990	Hawke	Defence	916.66
1993	Keating	Foreign Trade	769.42
1993	Keating	Defence	660.74
1994	Keating	Law, Crime	557.60
1996	Howard	Space, Science	2328.57
1996	Howard	Labour	1316.66
1996	Howard	Foreign Trade	810.71
1996	Howard	Environment	709.52
1996	Howard	Community	507.14
1998	Howard	Foreign Trade	826.31
1998	Howard	Energy	573.68
2010	Gillard	Energy	566.61